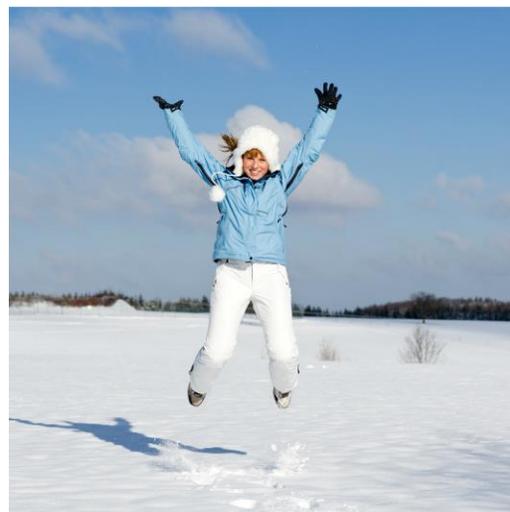


Preparing Your Body For Winter Sports

With the cold air here and snow building up, it's time to switch gears and get ready for outdoor winter activities – downhill skiing, cross country skiing, snowboarding, ice skating, hockey, and snow shoeing.

Winter sports place a large amount of stress on the body, requiring a high demand of cardiac output, muscular endurance, speed, balance, agility, power and coordination. Unless our muscles and tendons are prepared for this we run the risk of experiencing extreme muscle soreness and potentially causing injury, such as a muscle strain or sprain. By altering your workouts for winter sport conditioning, anywhere from a few weeks to a few months beforehand, you can help prevent soreness and injury and ensure you can continue enjoying the limited time activities all season long.



Functionally conditioning your body for a particular activity can also lead to gains in skill and performance, and a greater ability to recover quickly. Make sure your winter sport conditioning program includes all the following components: cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength, flexibility, speed, power, agility, balance and recovery.

Follow these guidelines for conditioning your body for winter sports:

- Maintain an adequate fitness level year round. This is the best way to prevent winter-sport related injuries! Your body will be better able to handle the increasingly harder physical demands you will be placing on it as you prepare yourself for the upcoming season.
- Gear your cardio to the endurance needed. Perform longer cardio session if your activity of choice requires the same pace for a long period of time, or try interval training if your sport involves multiple short bursts of activity.
- Focus on the muscle groups you will be using. This will ensure the muscles and ligaments are prepared for the extra stress being put on them. For most winter sports this includes the muscles of the lower body and core, so focus on exercises that strengthen the quadriceps, hamstrings, glutes, abdominals and back.
- Acclimatize yourself to the colder environment. This means moving your indoor workouts outdoors, which will prepare your lungs and muscles to work optimally in the colder temperature.
- Make sure to thoroughly warm up and cool down. They will accelerate/decelerate your heart rate at a steady pace and loosen up your muscles, which will help reduce your chance of spraining or straining a muscle.
- Treat any ailments you may have before partaking in winter sports. The high amount of stress put on the body by these activities will only aggravate any existing conditions and put a full stop to you enjoying them, so make sure to address any possible injuries beforehand with your doctor.



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- Seek out an expert's advice or take lessons. Whether it's working with a personal trainer in the gym or a qualified instructor on the slopes, they will be able to help you properly learn and progress in your conditioning or activity of choice.



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