

## Establishing a Winter Exercise Plan

Source: [Carris Health](#)

As the days become shorter and we head into the long, cold winter months, it's easy to fall into a lazy and unhealthy routine. Eating comfort foods and watching movies from the couch may sound enticing as the temperatures drop, but these choices are bound to catch up with you by spring.

The evidence is clear. Regular exercise makes us feel better, both physically and mentally. It reduces the risk of chronic diseases; lowers blood pressure and cholesterol; strengthens bones, muscles, and joints; increases energy; improves sleep; and helps maintain a healthy body weight.

According to the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans (second edition) published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services earlier this year, adults need a mix of physical activity to stay healthy. To attain the most health benefits from physical activity, adults need at least 150 to 300 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (like brisk walking) each week. In addition, adults also need muscle-strengthening activity, like lifting weights or doing yoga, at least 2 days each week.

Of course, each person needs to determine their appropriate level of effort based on their level of fitness. The key is to move more and sit less.

Here are some tips for keeping up a winter exercise routine, even if you don't have a gym membership.

### **1. Establish a routine that's manageable for you.**

Don't set yourself up for failure by trying to stick to a workout plan that doesn't fit your goals or your schedule.

### **2. Find something you enjoy.**

If you don't like being outside during the cold winter months, bring your workout routine indoors. Walk laps at the mall, download a workout app on your phone, or just turn the music up and dance.

### **3. Make the most of winter.**

Bundle up and go for a brisk walk, or try something new altogether. Maybe you'd enjoy winter hiking, cross-country skiing, snowboarding, or fat tire biking. You'll never know unless you try!

### **4. Find a buddy.**

It's always more fun to exercise with a friend, and chances are you'll find a lot less excuses when you're keeping each other accountable. Sign up for a class together, put a regular exercise date on your calendar, or just meet at the mall to walk laps. Be social and have fun!

#### **5. Track your steps.**

If you don't own a fitness tracker yet, consider investing in one. A good starting goal is 10,000 steps per day, which averages to about five miles per day for most people. Many newbies are shocked to find out how few steps they average in a day, which makes them more intentional in reaching their daily goal. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Park in the back row. Take a walk after dinner...just get those steps in!

Remember, just because it's cold outside doesn't mean you have to forgo your daily activity until spring. You are not a bear. Get up, move around, start a fitness plan, and stick to it. You'll be happier and healthier as a result.