

Outdoors health tips from the posse

Staying active in the winter months



Mark Rackay
Tips from the Posse

Spring, summer and fall are very easy months for me to stay active. I spend most of my time outdoors, either with farm chores around the home, or off to the hills where it is everything from hiking, packing to ATV riding. There are always the hunting seasons to help keep me active from my personal trips to the rescues done with the posse.

The warm months are much easier for me to keep up my workout routine. I run outside in the mornings, long before the sun or the neighbors wake up. If I were stuck to inside workouts, I would talk myself out of it. I would much rather pound pavement outside than feel like a hamster running on a wheel with a treadmill.

November, I usually finish up the last of my hunts, and things quiet down with the posse, so most of my motivation goes away with it. I guess I am just like an old bear that just wants to stuff himself and pile up on the couch and sleep for a couple months, but my wife vetoed that idea. Seems that all my good ideas die in subcommittee.

The biggest thing to remember in the winter months is to watch what you eat. Since you may be burning fewer calories because of less activity, food can be a problem. Staying in shape is only 25 percent exercise. The other 75 percent is your diet.

That is a hard problem for me to overcome because I was raised by a Polish grandmother who thought if you weren't eating, something was wrong with you. And the food that she gave me was not exactly healthy, but that was before we had invented fat, calories, heart disease and all the other things that keep us eating right. The lady ate whatever she felt like, without concern of health, and lived into her high 90s.

The good news is exercise in the cold burns more fat and calories than during the warmer times. Deposits of "brown fat" are activated as the body learns to get warmer, faster.

We have discussed before how the shorter days of winter, can cause depression and seasonal affective disorder (SAD.) There have been many studies that show increased winter activity and exercise helps to combat those blues. You will also get more of that very important vitamin D from sunlight, which is good for bones, teeth and muscles.

There are all kinds of activities to do in



Staying inside is pretty easy on days like this, but we need to remain active during the winter months.
(Mark Rackay/Special to the Montrose Daily Press)

the winter months outdoors here in western Colorado. The obvious, such as skiing or snowboarding, jump out for many, and that is a fantastic way to stay in shape.

I am not a skier and doubt I will ever try, but there are many more activities to try. Snowshoeing is something everyone can do. The new shoes are much lighter and easier to walk in than the old wooden type of years gone by. The mountains are very peaceful and quiet with the snow on the ground and trekking along on a pair of snowshoes is a great way to enjoy a day.

Colorado has some great ice fishing during the winter on scores of lakes around the western slope. Dress warmly and spend a day in the sun; and you just might catch something for dinner.

For those of us who enjoy our ATVs in the summer months, give snowmobiling a try. The new machines are very powerful and have many features, such as heated seats and grips, to help make the trip more comfortable in the cold. I

went up last year on an ATV with snow tracks on it and was amazed at how easy it was to get around in even the deepest of snow.

If you really can't get outdoors because of work or other interferences in your fun time, consider some inside activities. Anything from dance classes, yoga, indoor swimming, gym workouts, or even basketball, will fill the bill. All of these activities can be fun and keep you active over the winter.

I will always have a tough time staying active in the winter. Fortunately for my health, my wife will see to it that I eat right and she will not allow me to become a couch potato. I guess I can just pretend I am in training for next years hunting season. Stay healthy and enjoy the outdoors during the winter months

Mark Rackay is a freelance writer who serves as a director and spokesman for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the posse, call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org

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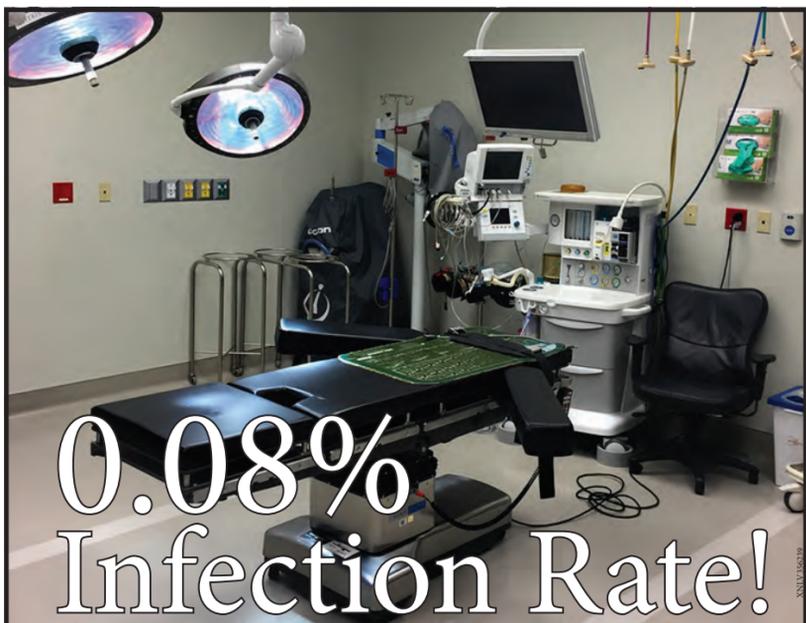
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Scarlett McElrea, 4, uses caution as she and her mom, Raleigh Coburn, feed the Chinese geese and the ducks at Baldrige Park. Coburn said she was surprised at how aggressive the geese could be.
(Paul Hirschmann/Montrose Daily Press file photo)

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