

Outdoor health tips from the Posse:

After the holidays....

My Polish grandmother raised me for the first 8 years of my youth. She was from a time before they invented such things as high cholesterol, heart disease and eating healthy. She thought exercise was silly because it only made you hot and tired; better to sit and have a piece of cake. In her day, everything had lots of sugar and salt, and the preferred method of cooking was to fry in oil.

My grandmother also believed that eating was the only way to check a person's vitals. She cared not about pulse, breathing rates or blood pressure. If you were awake, you should be hungry and eating. This was especially true when the holidays were around and she cooked up a daily feast of cookies, cakes and pies. Perhaps she knew something about health because she lived to a ripe age of 93.

I have never been one to argue with her philosophy about eating. My wife of many years is an excellent chef. Fortunately, she is health conscious and keeps me on the right path, except around the holidays.

Now that the holidays are in the rearview mirror, and hopefully all the Christmas treats are gone, it is time to get back to reality. For me, this means having to eat right (again) and get back to the regular workout.

Doing a regular workout in the colder months, such as January and February, can be difficult. Mother Nature seems to provide a new array of potential excuses. The weather can be the major cause of procrastination for a regular workout.

Getting your cardio during the cold months can be a challenge. Of course, you can retreat indoors and hit the stationary bike or the treadmill. I am not much for either. I feel like a hamster running on a wheel, never getting anywhere, so I try to take it outside.



Mark Rackay
Tips from the Posse



Now that the holidays are behind us, it is time to quit eating snacks like this and get back to a regular workout. (Special to the Montrose Daily Press/Mark Rackay)

Whether you choose power walking, running or bike riding for your cardio exercise, the outdoors is the best place. Fresh air and the possibility of soaking in a bit of sunshine can help with moods and mental health in addition to the exercise benefits.

The hours of daylight are shorter during the winter months, limiting your potential time outdoors. For safety's sake, try to schedule your activity during the daylight hours. Wearing a reflective safety vest will make you more visible to oncoming traffic.

Dress in layers before heading out. I try to suit up as if it is 20 degrees warmer than the actual temperature, assuming your workout will be somewhat aggressive. When running or bike riding, this makes it just about right.

Your base layers should be wool or a synthetic material. Polyester or polypropylene work well. You want a material that will wick moisture away from your skin to prevent you from getting chilled. Cotton may be fine for nice summer barbecues but not for serious exercise outside.

The next layer should insulate but allow moisture to escape. I find that fleece works well here. When the temperature is cold enough for a third layer, I look for a lightweight and waterproof jacket that I can unzip to allow air in. I can also remove it, and tie it around my waist if I get too warm.

The most important thing for me is the condition of the ground I will be running on. When the roads or trails have snow or ice on them, special care must be given, lest you go high heels over tin cups. I have taken the spill more times than I care to admit, usually only resulting in damage to my ego.

You can wear shoes with an aggressive tread to help with traction over the slippery stuff. Some folks, with a little more gray matter on top of their head, just stay inside on days when the roads are slick. For bike riders, snow and ice are not your friend. Until they invent studded tires for a 10-speed, I would avoid the slick roads.

Being out in the cold increases the calories you burn. If you are cold and shivering, you can take encourage-

ment from the fact that you are burning extra calories while trying to stay warm. The more you shiver, the more you burn.

According to the American Council On Exercise, you may burn about 400 calories an hour from shivering, depending on the temperature and the heaviness of your clothing. This does not mean that if you strip down to your skivvies, and stand outside in the cold because that is an open invitation to hypothermia. I only mention this to add incentive to taking the workout outdoors.

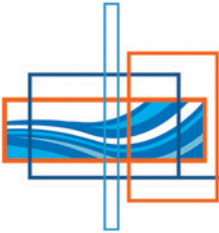
Some folks might want to consider wearing a mask when exercising outdoors on those really cold days. Cold and dry winter air can cause bronchial spasms, which inhibit the air from filling the lungs properly and wearing a light mask can warm the air before it hits your lungs.

Just because it's cold out, doesn't mean you don't have to hydrate. You lose as much fluid in winter as you do in summer. Drink water before, during and after your exercise outside. I find I never really get thirsty in the cold, unlike the hot summer months. Don't let that fool you, hit the water bottle.

Think about wind strength and direction while you are out. Wind can add resistance to your exercise, similar to running or biking uphill. Try to have the wind in your face for the first half of your run, and at your back for the return trip.

Just because it is cold outside is no excuse to give up on your exercise routine. The fresh air and sunshine will do more good for you, besides just the exercise. In the meantime, I am going to search the house for any Christmas cookies my wife might have missed. I am just not ready to graze on lettuce and carrot sticks just yet. Maybe next week.


Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press and an avid hunter who travels all across North America in search of adventure, and serves as a director and public information officer 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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