



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

When is it too cold to exercise outside?

How to stay safe when you work out in sub-zero temperatures

Ottawa (Dec. 14, 2011) — This winter, thousands of Canadian skiers, skaters, snowboarders and runners will prove that it's cool to exercise in cold weather. The key to staying fit as the temperature falls is proper preparation to ensure your workout is both productive and safe.

Before you even head outside for activity, pay attention to the weather forecast. The recommended cutoff for outdoor exercise is -30°C with the wind chill, due to the risk of frostbite and hypothermia, "At that temperature, the risk outweighs the reward of getting out there and exercising," says Brad Spokes, a Saskatchewan physiotherapist and triathlete.

Keep in mind that when exercising in cold weather, muscles require more fuel at a faster rate and may fatigue more rapidly than anticipated. Make sure you have had a light meal an hour or so before your work out to 'fuel up'.

Prepare for a cold weather workout with a dynamic warm up — running on the spot, lunges, squats and arm swings, for example — until you feel warm from head to toe.

Cold-weather clothing is crucial. "Dressing too warmly is one of the biggest pitfalls," says Spokes. He suggests layers that can be removed or added in response to your body's heating and cooling. A toque, gloves and warm socks will prevent heat loss, a winter face mask is helpful to moisten air travelling to the lungs, and shoes with gripping soles can prevent falls on the ice.

Don't forget to stay hydrated. Even though thirst may be less noticeable in cold weather, sweating and the resulting dehydration can be a concern. A fuel belt that lies close to the body or a thermal water bottle can keep liquids from freezing.

Spokes recommends keeping warm until the end of your workout by gradually decreasing the intensity of exercise towards the end and doing the final cool-down indoors. "But probably the most important thing is to get out of wet clothes," he says.

Most people can exercise safely in cold weather by taking these precautions, but if you have asthma, or other chronic conditions that affect your mobility, consult a physiotherapist to develop a routine that's safe for you. Find a physiotherapist at www.physiotherapy.ca