

“Don’t Hibernate: How to Stay Active and Safe in the Winter Cold”

It’s never too difficult to think of reasons to abandon your workout routine. This is especially true during the winter months, when the temperatures drop, the sky turns dark, and the wind seems to start pushing you back indoors to the warmth of your couch. Health experts urge, however, that exercise should be incorporated into your everyday routine, no matter the weather.

“The advantages of regular exercise are too great to be put on hold when workouts become inconvenient, especially during colder months,” explains Peter B. Ajluni, D.O., a board certified osteopathic orthopedic surgeon from Bloomfield Hills and devoted exerciser. “People who exercise reduce their risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, certain cancers, diabetes and osteoporosis.”

In addition to these benefits, Dr. Ajluni adds that exercising can help with the winter blues as well. “Regular workouts will improve your mood, increase your energy level and help you sleep better at night” he says.

There are many ways to continue your fitness regime during the winter, Dr. Ajluni advises. “All it takes is a little creativity and knowing how to dress for the outdoor climate.”

To battle the cold weather excuses, Dr. Ajluni recommends exploring new methods of exercise, such as the following ideas:

- **Walk the mall:** Leave your wallet at home and use the mall as an indoor track.
- **Join a health club.** Choose one close to home or work and ask the staff to show you how to use the equipment.
- **Join a class or indoor team:** There are plenty of fitness classes available through community organizations or local health clubs. From dancing, to boot-camp aerobics, there’s bound to be a class suited just for your fitness level and taste.
- **Find an indoor pool:** Indoor swimming is a great way to build stamina and stay lean through winter. Whether you’re taking a dip for a water-aerobics class or swimming some laps, there are plenty of ways to enjoy water inside.
- **Create a home gym:** Invest in some practical, enjoyable and easy to use exercise equipment. To stretch your exercise dollars, consider buying them used.
- **Everything counts:** From vacuuming the house to shoveling snow, remember that many activities count toward being fit. Even if you don’t have a workout planned for the day, try to think of some way to be active.

Of course, you can also continue your workouts outside in the winter and get a great workout, too. Whether it's running, walking, snow-shoeing, skiing, or skating, Dr. Ajluni stresses the importance of wearing the appropriate amount of clothing for the various outdoor winter activities.

“The key to staying comfortable and safe during outdoor winter workouts is to dress in layers,” Dr. Ajluni. “That way, as your body temperature rises during the workout, you can peel away the layers you no longer need.”

Here are some guidelines for suiting up safely:

- **Layer properly:** Start with a thin synthetic material, such as polypropylene, to draw sweat away from your body. Your second layer should be an insulating layer, preferably a fleece, which will keep you warm, but also allow water vapor to pass through. Finally, top with a waterproof, breathable outer layer to protect you from the winter elements.
- **Cover your extremities:** Pay special attention to your fingers, toes and ears, where you are most susceptible to frostbite. Remember, you lose 90% of your body heat through your head, so be sure to always wear a hat.
- **Take safety precautions:** If it's dark outside, wear a reflective outer layer. If the surface of the ground is uneven due to weather conditions, choose footwear with enough traction to prevent falls.
- **Remember sunscreen:** Snow reflects the sun's rays, so sunburn is possible even if you're cold.

When it's cold outdoors, there's no need to give up and hit the couch. With a little planning and creativity, you can step up to the challenges of winter exercise and maintain your healthy lifestyle.

Preventive medicine is just one aspect of care osteopathic physicians (D.O.s) provide. Osteopathic physicians are fully licensed to prescribe medicine, practice in all medical specialties and have specialized training to provide “patient-centered” care that considers all aspects of a patient's life including family, work, recreation, activities and life events. D.O.s are also specially trained in osteopathic manual medicine, a hands-on diagnostic and therapeutic technique to correct and prevent disease and injury. For more information on osteopathic medicine and how to locate an osteopathic physician in your area, contact the Michigan Osteopathic Association at (800) 657-1556 or www.mi-osteopathic.org.

Physician Bio

Physician Bio

Dr. Peter Ajluni is a doctor of osteopathic medicine, so you will see D.O. after his name. He is a graduate of the Chicago College of Osteopathy, now known as

Midwestern University/Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine in Downers Grove, Ill., and has been an osteopathic physician for more than 35 years. As former chief of staff at Mount Clemens Regional Medical Center, Dr. Ajluni is a senior orthopedic surgeon for the hospital as well as vice chair of the Mount Clemens Regional Medical Center Board of Trustees.

In addition, Dr. Ajluni served as 2007-08 President of the American Osteopathic Association (AOA), a national association representing more than 64,000 osteopathic physicians (D.O.s). As an avid hiker and jogger who has participated in a number of marathons and triathlons, Dr. Ajluni chose “*D.O.s: Fit for Life*” as his presidential theme to convey the importance of osteopathic physicians serving as health and fitness role models for their patients.. As a speaker, Dr. Ajluni travels across the United States speaking about fitness, wellness and the prevention of chronic disease.

“As an osteopathic physician, I have an opportunity and an obligation to educate my patients on the benefits that exercise and fitness can have on their overall wellness and ultimately on their quality of life. I walk the walk so that I can talk the talk with my patients, my family and my community.”