

# Your Health

By Raulan Young, MPT, PRC

## Winter Fitness Made Easy in Southern Idaho

Most of us understand the benefits of exercise for cardiovascular health and weight loss, but let's consider the benefits of movement itself. Repetitive habits and movements stimulate the human body to develop patterns between the brain, muscular, respiratory, and skeletal systems. In other words, these systems make up our "posture."

As humans become more and more sedentary, we are losing the ability to function with balanced muscle groups. To be healthy and pain-free, we need to be able to move and breathe in alternating patterns of movement in all three planes of motion. Many of us only walk on flat level surfaces, perform repetitive activities at our jobs, or sleep only in familiar positions. We may also have habits of sitting, standing, or driving where we unconsciously shift and maintain our weight to one side of the body. This leads to restrictions in rib cage and trunk movement during breathing and contributes to fatigue. These are referred to as functionally restricted patterns.

Left unchecked, these patterns can lead to back, knee, hip, spine, or neck pain. Participation in activities that require alternating movement in all three planes of motion can reduce the risk of developing these types of muscle and skeletal problems.

Winter isn't a time to hibernate. It's a season that provides opportunities to participate in activities



that reduce functionally restrictive patterns and provide cardiovascular benefits.

Snow skiing is an activity that promotes movement in all three planes of motion due to constantly changing



slope and variety of terrain. A 180-pound man can burn nearly 500 calories per hour on the slopes. Skiing challenges all of the essential anti-gravity muscle groups and causes the brain to anticipate upcoming movement. This is called feed-forward training and will optimize one's ability to balance and to use muscles in beneficial patterns.

Cross country skiing is an activity that requires reciprocal alternating movement of the arms, legs, and, most importantly, the trunk—especially if performed on uneven terrain. The same 180-pound man would burn 790 calories per hour at moderate intensity.

Snowshoeing promotes movement in all three planes of motion and burns 600 calories an hour. Of all the sports mentioned above, snowshoeing is easiest to learn, and all ages and fitness levels can participate. Why not ski or snowshoe into a yurt up Rock Creek Canyon, or view City of Rocks in a way you have never seen before (see page 23).

Discovering or rediscovering a winter sport will give you a reason to become and stay fit while giving you something to look forward to during those dark winter months. Take advantage of the resources Southern Idaho has to offer. Grab a friend and stay active this winter. [LEA](#)



Wintertime provides opportunities to participate in activities that reduce functionally restrictive patterns and provide cardiovascular benefits.

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