



THE IMPORTANCE OF STAYING ACTIVE DURING THE WINTER MONTHS

We know how hard it can be to maintain your exercise routine in the winter. Fewer daylight hours, cold temperatures, and potential hazardous terrain tend to keep us firmly planted in the house.

US health habits take a sharp decline in the winter. However, for a country already grappling with high levels of obesity and chronic disease, improving good health habits year-round is a **critical challenge**.

Think of the winter as a time to get more creative with your exercise routine. Staying on track throughout the winter months will lead you to feeling even better than you usually do in the spring and summer seasons. Regular exercise improves your mood, increases energy levels, decreases pain conditions, and helps you sleep better at night. Staying active will also help you fight off the worst of colds and flu-like symptoms that are more prevalent during the colder months.

Try the **Walk With Ease** program that is self-directed and enhanced with the help of health coaches. This is available year-round for adults of all ages and health status. It is especially good for those who are new to exercise, have been sedentary for a while, or for adults with increased risk for or have chronic conditions such as prediabetes, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, arthritis, or during cancer treatments.

This six-week program can be done from anywhere! A health coach complements the Walk With Ease program by helping you address barriers for staying active during these most challenging months ahead.

For outdoor walking in the winter, remember:

- Invest in a good jacket/hat/gloves, winter boots and/or ice traction shoe covers
- Look for routes near your house that are shoveled or plowed consistently
- Wear a scarf or mask loosely over your nose and mouth to prevent the sting of icy cold air when you inhale

Here are some ways to get your steps in with the Walk With Ease program during these upcoming winter months:

- When the weather is not too cold or the ground is not too icy, walking outdoors in cooler weather can help you burn up to 34% more calories than in milder temperatures
- Try pole walking!
- Consider a new activity to do with the whole family like cross-country skiing or snowshoeing
- Go to a gym, fitness club, or recreation center
- Get your walk in at the mall or other large stores that you can take an extra lap or two in (Costco/Sam's Club, Bass Pro/Scheels, Mills Fleet Farm, furniture stores)
- Walk down the hall in your home or hallways in your apartment building/living center



- Use your treadmill if you have one or reserve time on a friend's treadmill
- Find public buildings that have space to walk in (churches, school gyms, hotel halls)

If you need to 'stay at home' due to a COVID high risk status, then try these options:

- Set up a track or select a route around the yard and get walking
- Put on your favorite music and start marching in place – can add side stepping or backwards walking to make it more challenging
- If you have kids, play follow the leader walking around the house and take turns leading

The key is to get your heart rate up to a moderate level and maintain that for as long as you set your goals for at the beginning of the program. If you can track your heart rate and distance walked with a wearable device, that will help you in setting future exercise intensity goals. If you don't have a wearable, you can manually check your heart rate by counting the beats per 30 seconds and multiply by two or counting the beats for 15 seconds and multiply by four to get beats/minute. Moderate intensity is about 50-70% of max heart rate.

If you are interested in the program, email info@chpcommunity.org or call 515-635-1285 for more information.