



It's Snow Time!

How to reconnect with your inner winter-child

There was a time when I loved winter.

Back when I was in elementary school, I couldn't wait to get outside and play in the snow, making snowballs, building forts and generally horsing around.

But as I grew older, my excitement for snow began to fade. Somehow, winter went from tobogganing and building snowmen to dead car batteries and weekends of hibernation. Without an activity to enjoy, winter was a long, cold three months and I couldn't wait for spring to arrive.

Then a few years ago, I discovered Snow Trek.

Snow Trek is a community initiative designed to help people reconnect with their inner winter-child by letting everyone try cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, with free equipment loans and free instruction.

My friend Cam and I attended Snow Trek at FortWhyte Alive, where we took the opportunity to try snowshoeing. After getting basic lessons on technique from one of the friendly instructors, we set out for the afternoon on one of the many trails.

We had a great time. Snowshoeing offers a great cardiovascular workout. Shortly after we started, I could feel my heart pounding. I soon realized that it was important to pace myself, so I could chat with my friend as we moved across the snow.

We soon discovered that snowshoeing is an easy-to-learn activity that can be done almost anywhere – all you need is a little bit of snow. If you are just starting out, snowshoeing on a packed trail is easier than breaking ground in fresh snow.

Cross-country skiing is another great activity featured during Snow Trek. It's a low-impact, total body activity that will get your blood pumping while working the muscles in both your upper and lower body. It is a life-long activity that has many benefits for every member of the family.

Adding an activity like cross-country skiing or

Wet your winter whistle

Remember to drink! Even when it is cold outside, it is important to continue to hydrate, especially when you are active. We often think about losing water in the hotter months, but we continue to lose water through breathing, sweating and evaporation in the winter. Be sure to drink before, during and after you exercise. Thirst is the number one signal the body uses to tell us we need water and there is nothing better to quench your thirst than water.



snowshoeing to your routine can help you maintain a healthy weight, feel good about yourself and have more energy.

If you'd like to reconnect with winter, why not come out for Snow Trek 2012? There are still two dates where you can learn to snowshoe and cross-country ski, with free instruction and equipment to try. On Feb. 5, Snow Trek will be at the Harbourview Recreation Centre, and on Feb. 12, head for either the Windsor Park Nordic Centre or the Living Prairie Museum. For more information, visit winnipeg.inmotion.ca or call 204-940-3648.

Before you know it, you'll be coming out of hibernation, conquering the cold of winter, and feeling all the better for getting "in motion!"

Amy Tibbs is a co-ordinator with Winnipeg in motion.

Find your perfect winter activity

Winter offers a wide variety of outdoor activities for fun and fitness. No matter your experience or fitness level, you are bound to find an activity that's right for you from our list of favourites.

SKATING

A great cardiovascular activity that is perfect for Winnipeg winters. When the weather is good, you can go to one of the many outdoor pleasure rinks at your local community centre or park. When it's cold outside, you can head indoors to one of the 13 arenas for free public skate times.

Visit www.winnipeg.ca (search 'pleasure rinks') or check out page 35 of the Winter 2012 edition of the Leisure Guide. Other great locations for skating are the Duck Pond at Assiniboine Park and the Assiniboine Credit Union River Trail at The Forks. Visit www.assiniboinepark.ca or www.theforks.com for more information. Skates can be rented at Iceland Skate Rentals in the Forks Market Atrium.

SNOWSHOEING

If you like to walk, taking it off the beaten path with a pair of snowshoes may be the perfect fit for you. By making sure you go at a moderate pace, you will derive health benefits in addition to enjoying the tranquility of nature. Visit FortWhyte Alive and rent one of the many pairs of snowshoes for ages 5 and up. For more information, visit www.fortwhyte.org.

TOBOGGANING

A classic winter activity, tobogganing is great for the whole family. Instead of just racing downhill on your sled, try racing each other back up the hill to keep warm and get your heart pumping. Visit Winnipeg.ca (search 'hills and slides') for a listing of tobogganing hills and slides throughout Winnipeg.



SKIJORING

If you are looking for a workout for you and your dog, try cross-country skiing with your dog, also known as skijoring. Derived from the Norwegian word for "ski-driving," skijoring is the perfect sport for the cross-country ski enthusiast with one or two dogs. Basically, you provide power by cross country skiing and your dogs provide extra power by running and pulling. For more information on skijoring visit: www.snowmotion.ca. If you are looking to hit the trails without your pooch, check out www.ccsam.ca/where-to-ski/where-to-ski-winnipeg.

Snow Trek times & places

Snow Trek – Join Winnipeg *in motion* for an afternoon of free snowshoeing and cross-country skiing at Snow Trek. Not sure how? There will be free lessons and equipment offered at each site. All events run from 12 noon to 4 p.m.

February 5 – Harbourview Recreation Centre

February 12 – Windsor Park Nordic Centre and Living Prairie Museum

For more information, visit www.winnipeginmotion.ca.

There is no shortage of winter fun in Winnipeg. Check out these great events happening around town to find the activity that is right for you.

Festival du Voyageur – For a variety of outdoor activities for the whole family, visit Voyageur Park. Climb the hill, go sliding or make your way through the snow maze. For those looking for a taste of the voyageurs' lifestyle, be sure to stop by the Voyageur Training Centre to try your luck at voyageur sports and mind-bending challenges. The Festival takes place between Feb. 17 and Feb. 26.

For details on events visit: www.festivalvoyageur.mb.ca.

Ice Donkey Adventure Race

– Why wait for spring to get out and get moving? Come celebrate snow and ice at Ice Donkey. Participate as a solo or team of 2 in this winter multi-sport style event that will test your mettle in snowshoeing, ice-biking, running and skating.

For more event details or to register, visit: www.swampdonkeyar.com.



Safety Tips

Winter activities can be a lot of fun, but the snow and ice can add greater risk for slips and falls. Follow these tips to keep safe during your new activity.

Warm up your body – A good warm-up prepares your body for exercise and reduces your chance of injury by increasing the blood flow to working muscles. Spend five to 10 minutes on a general warm-up by swinging your arms and moving your legs as if you are skating, skiing or snowshoeing.

Start slow – After a general warm-up, take the first few minutes of your activity at a leisurely pace and gradually increase to a moderate or vigorous intensity. If you are trying out something new, regardless of your fitness level, your muscles will be worked in a different way than they are used to, so start out with shorter bouts and gradually build up.

Wear a helmet – Protect yourself and your family while skating and tobogganing by wearing a properly fitted helmet that is recommended for your activity. Remember to follow the rules of the rink or hill to avoid collisions. For safety tips, helmet-fitting guidelines and help choosing the right helmets for winter activities such as ice skating, hockey, tobogganing, skiing, snowboarding and snowmobiling, visit www.thinkfirst.ca/safetyinfo.aspx.

Traction aids – Snow and ice add an extra risk of slips and falls during the winter months. When walking in the winter, adding traction aids that go on the bottom of your shoes or boots will help prevent slips and falls. You can also try using Nordic walking poles to increase the intensity of your walk and to provide extra balance.

Dressing for the weather

The secret to enjoying outdoor activities is keeping dry and warm. When deciding what to wear, there are three key layers of clothing that you need to consider: the base layer, the mid-layer and the outer layer.

The base layer: This is the layer that goes directly against your skin. It's meant to keep you dry by moving moisture away from the skin, to your outer layers, where it can be evaporated. You want to look for something that is a synthetic material, with flat seams, that fits snug but isn't tight or constricting. Avoid materials such as cotton, which tends to trap moisture and stay wet, which will draw heat from your body. Depending on your activity level and weather conditions, you can choose between a light, medium or heavy base layer.

The mid-layer: This layer has two main functions: to continue transporting moisture away from the body as well as retaining warmth. Your mid-layer should be looser than your base layer but still snug. Wool, fleece and synthetic blends are all common material for this layer. It's quite common to find extra features such as pit-zips to allow for extra venting.

The outer layer: This is the layer that protects you from the elements such as wind and snow. You want to look for a jacket that will allow moisture to escape and air to circulate. Depending on the conditions you will be facing, look for wind – or water – resistant materials.

When it comes to choosing a toque and mitts, remember that fleece is warm but it won't stop the wind. Be sure to look for a wind-blocking fabric and you will be ready to enjoy the outdoors all winter long.

For more information on dressing for the weather, visit www.mec.ca.

