

## Keeping warm during winter...

A drop in the thermometer reading should not mean that it's time to duck under those covers and skip those exercise classes or regimes you have been doing over the last few months. Winter is the season where it becomes even more important to continue regular physical activity as this will:

- help keep you on the path of weight maintenance or loss
- enable you to maintain cardiovascular fitness
- ensure that your fitness levels remain unchanged
- help keep your momentum going
- help elevate your mood especially on those dark, cold and dreary? Dreary sounds a bit negative perhaps use: 'difficult to get up' mornings

### **Further motivation to exercise::**

Apart from better heart health and weight control, exercise also helps to relieve stress, boost energy levels, improve self image, manage high blood pressure and increase muscle strength. In younger children it forms part of a heart healthy lifestyle, thus preventing the onset on chronic lifestyle diseases later on in life. In older people, it helps delay or prevent chronic illnesses and diseases associated with ageing.

At this time, you may be saying to yourself, I have heard this all before...so why are you still sitting cold? Get up, get active and get warm...put some *spring* into your step even in *winter*.

According to the Sports Science Institute of South Africa, **81% of South Africans** have 1 or more risk factors for the development of chronic diseases of lifestyle (diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease). What's even scarier is that these risk factors account for an estimated 26% of deaths! Incorporating physical activity into your daily life can improve your health risk profile. The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa recommends that one should do physical activity of moderate intensity for **at least 30 minutes** on most days of the week (preferably cardiovascular exercise). Examples of these include: brisk walking, jogging, running, skipping, swimming, aerobics or cycling.

### **Some tips to help you stay focused during winter:**

- Be realistic with your goals, if you can't exercise on most days – commit to at least three days a week
- Choose an activity that you enjoy or mix and match activities to allow for variety
- If you enjoy exercising outdoors, try to warm up indoors as it might be easier to face the cold when your body is warm
- If you find the transition from your bed to your workout difficult, try easy warm up exercises like yoga to get you started
- A combination of indoor and outdoor activities might be more enjoyable and less mundane
- Create a gym environment at home (if finances permit) using some dumbbells, an exercise ball and a skipping rope
- Exercise with a friend – accountability to someone other than yourself can help keep you on track
- Do extra walking in the mall (a step counter is an excellent tool to help you quantify your physical activity)
- Dance or home exercise videos are also a great way to get you to be active indoors (might work better in a group) eg, Hip Hop Abs, personally recommended by the Communications Officer at the Heart and Stroke Foundation SA, Murishca Martheze, who found the DVD, "body transforming and super fun"
- Your gym may have a heated indoor swimming pool - just a few laps a day can push start for a toned body. Think Ryk Neethling!
- Create your own aerobics workout at home – use music that you enjoy to create a more inspiring atmosphere
- If you have stairs at home, this can be used for getting in some physical activity – a 20 minute climb up and down can give you a good cardiovascular workout!
- Set yourself a goal for winter and reward yourself with something worth working towards e.g. a weekend away, a spa treatment or a new pair of shoes

Remember, whichever way you choose to remain active this winter is up to you - what matters is that you do!

**Written by Ayesha Seedat, Registered Dietitian, Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa**

For more heart smart advice from a registered dietitian, call the Heart Mark Diet Line on 0860 223 222, visit our website [www.heartfoundation.co.za](http://www.heartfoundation.co.za) or email [heart@heartfoundation.co.za](mailto:heart@heartfoundation.co.za)