



REVIVING UP INSIDE: IDEAS FOR INDOOR WINTER ACTIVITIES

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If you made a New Year's resolution to be active, but the weather's making it difficult, you're not alone. Canadians of all ages can find it challenging to remain active in winter, especially outside in the cold. Luckily, there are many popular activities to do inside. There are also unique indoor activities that you can consider.



Remember: these activities can be done year round. If it's difficult to be outside (e.g., if there are health alerts about hot weather, high UV index, smog, pollen or West Nile, indoor activities are the way to go!

What are other Canadians doing?

Ed and Jean: dancing and walking their way to health

Ed and Jean Matwichuk, from Edmonton, Alberta, square dance at least once a week during winter. They've been dancing since Ed retired 12 or 13 years ago.

"There is a large social aspect to square dancing because what you also do is visit other square dancing clubs. There is that camaraderie to it," says Ed.

A dance, called a tip, can last three to 10 minutes. Dancers learn up to 68 basic steps and up to 60 more for more complicated moves.

"You can be very active in those three to 10 minutes. Some of those dances are very fast, and you have to use your head and listen to what the caller is saying," says Jean.

Jean and Ed also curl during winter, and Jean mall walks. "Mall walking can be a good way to keep fit", she says. The mall closest to her house has record cards printed as part of its mall walkers club. Walkers can track how many mall laps they do and how long they walk for or the number of steps they take.

Ryan: taking the plunge

Ryan Davis, 22, is finishing his final year in Kinesiology and Health Sciences at York University in Ontario. He teaches water aerobics four times a week and also teaches swimming. Yet, despite these activities, he has found it difficult to keep active in winter.

"Before I finally started swimming again, I found I had got out of the habit and I wouldn't go. Water aerobics was all I was doing," he says.

Things changed for Ryan when he started planning to swim regularly with friends. "Me and a couple of people I worked with decided to get back into swimming," says Ryan. "We started to go every Tuesday night at the pool where I work and we've been doing that for a year."

"I hope I keep up swimming as I get older," he adds. "I have done it my whole life and really enjoy it. It's very beneficial and a great way to stay active."

Keep active in your workplace

Many people spend a large part of their waking hours at work. If your workplace allows you to fit physical activity into your time at work, it can really help your overall activity level.

Here are some practical ideas for how you can be active indoors at work:

- Take the stairs. If you are able to, skipping the elevator is the simplest way to boost your physical activity at work. Why not coordinate a stair climb challenge? Post a chart at the top of the stairwell and encourage employees to track the number of flights of stairs they climb each workday.
- Walk to a co-worker's office to give him or her a message. It's more active—and more personal—than using e-mail or the telephone.
- Take an active break (go walking, stretch at your desk) instead of a coffee break.
- Organize active fundraisers rather than bingos. Use a physical challenge, such as taking turns to ride a stationary bike for 24 hours, to raise money and awareness for your favourite charity.

Persephone: getting active beyond the gym

Persephone Pogue, 17, from Québec, said she and her friends have all tried gyms, but they find the routine boring. To stay out of the cold, they prefer to walk around the underground downtown mall, like Jean.

“The cold usually makes me not want to go out,” says Persephone. “We may throw some snowballs around, but after minus 15, I want to go inside and stay there.”

Persephone also has hand weights and a treadmill at home that she uses fairly often. She also does a lot of sit-ups.

Video games that actually get you moving!

There is also another way that Persephone keeps active. She and her friends play a music video game where you dance to pop music and your steps are shown on the screen. At the end of a song, the game awards you points based on how well you did positioning your steps to the beat of the music.

“Regular video games end up boring me,” said Persephone. “I like this one because I always get better at it, and I like the music.”



Keeping active in your home

A lot of exercises that you can do in your home are also very inexpensive:

- Use soup cans, bottled water or books as weights to lift.
- Climb your stairs (carefully!).
- Dance to music on the radio.
- If your balance is good, try to stand on one foot while brushing your teeth.

Persephone sees it as fun and exercise. “You know you are getting a workout because when you finish a round you are really tired. But at the same time, it is so much fun that you don't care.”

Learning to be active

Jen Kelday, a sports animator at Annapolis Valley Regional School Board, Nova Scotia, says,

We have one big success story here at our school board—an active video dance game! It is huge. Every lunch hour and recess, students are lined up for their turn to jump on the dance pads.

The kids are constantly moving hard while it is their turn. They are practising in the background the rest of the time. By the end of lunch hour or gym class, they are covered in sweat.

At first our school board purchased the pads and lent them out to schools on a rotating basis, but now almost all the schools have purchased their own sets so they can use them during phys. ed. classes, after school programs or the lunch hour. We also hold [dance] tournaments by inviting schools to compete with each other.

Dean: enjoying the ice... indoors

Dean Krawec, 37, from St. Albert, Alberta, has played sledge hockey since 1998. He had met a couple of guys who played the sport, and they invited him to try the game.

Sledge hockey is a sport that lets people with physical disabilities play ice hockey. Instead of skating, players sit on a special sledge that has skate blades. They use two sticks and the sledge (or sled) to manoeuvre themselves around the ice.



Dean is the goalie for his team, which is part of the Edmonton Sled Hockey Club. The team is made up of men from the ages of 15 to mid-40s.

“I played sports before I was injured (my left leg and right arm were amputated), so it is kind of nice to hang out with some guys and be part of a team again,” says Dean, who is also president of the club. “You hang out with guys who have injuries, and you can talk about wheelchairs, different things. Playing the sport helps you in life too.”

Keep at it

Being regularly active throughout the year has important health benefits for people of all ages. There are a lot of ideas here for how to stay active despite the weather. To make them work, however, you have to commit to being active.

Life is full of distractions, so here are some tips to help you to keep moving:

- Choose activities that are fun.
- Try a unique activity (wall climbing, pole dancing, laser tag, or drum dancing, for example).
- Exercise with other people.
- Keep a diary of your physical activity.
- Set specific, realistic goals.
- Join a team or club.
- Find activities that fit into your daily routine.



If you have a favourite outdoor activity but the weather isn't cooperating, can you do the activity indoors? Or, is there another activity that includes some of the elements you enjoy? If you're a walker, check out your local mall-walking program. If hiking and scrambling is your thing, try an indoor climbing wall!

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