

## **Use Creative Methods to Stay in Shape during the Holiday Season**

*By Trent Nessler, PT, DPT, MPT, Managing Director, Outpatient Rehabilitation*

As the weather gets colder and the holidays get closer, it's probably getting harder to resist the urge to skip your exercise routine. Going to holiday parties, watching Tennessee Titans games or cuddling by a fire can seem like much better ways to spend your time. However, your health and staying on track with your workout routine is just as important during the winter as it is during swimsuit season, so adapting your workout to this time of year is crucial.

Here are some tips for staying in shape during the holiday season:

- Outdoor running in the crisp fall air feels great after the hot, humid summer months. . Colder weather can bring an added risk of tight muscles, so a good warm-up and stretch before each workout to prevent injuries is more important than ever. Also, be sure to watch out for slick spots on the pavement. Rain, leaves and frost can make sidewalks and roads slippery.
- If you'd rather not be outside during the winter months, there are still ways to stay fit. Try power walking around Cool Springs Galleria or Opry Mills Mall before the stores open. As you exercise, you can window-shop for holiday presents. Another fun way to exercise indoors is roller-skating or ice skating with your family. You'll get some great family bonding time and you won't even realize that you are burning calories.
- Even though the holiday rush can be hectic, making exercise a part of your schedule is important to maintain your health and aids in reducing holiday related stress. When relatives come to visit, it's easy to push exercise to the end of your to-do list. Include family in your workout plans. An after-Thanksgiving dinner walk with your relatives could be the perfect opportunity to have a good conversation and get your exercise in at the same time.
- Another trap that people often fall into this time of year is overindulging in holiday treats. Don't completely restrict yourself from enjoying some treats – **moderation** is the key. At parties, pick your favorite dessert and have just one cookie or slice of cake. Set a goal to maintain your weight during the holiday season. With the average American gaining between one and 10 pounds between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day, just maintaining your weight puts you ahead of the game.

When the time comes to set those New Year resolutions, consider family fitness. Tennessee is one of the top 10 states for childhood obesity and there's no better influence on a child's fitness than a parent. When considering your fitness goals for 2008, consider the health of the whole family. Simple goals such as a half mile walk with your children at night, involvement in group fitness class with your child or playing soccer on the weekends will strengthen the family bond and aid in creating healthy habits for your children.

Stay healthy and get your family moving too. You won't regret it come New Year's Day.

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