

Fun Fact of the Week

Don't Let December Derail Your Fitness Goals – 8 Ways to Feel More Motivated and Energized This Month*

Oh December, why are you the hardest month for fitness? With cold, dark days, getting up early in the morning feels impossible. After work it's dark and all you want to do is get home and eat pasta (is that just me?).

Running season is over. Even if you held out through November and did a Turkey Trot on Thanksgiving, chances are, December doesn't offer any big running goals. There's too much going on. Plus, the food in December gets out of control. What's Christmas without Christmas cookies, peppermint lattes, eggnog and gingerbread? Sweets abound! Yummy traditional treats and celebrations are everywhere (Chanukah latkes and fried EVERYTHING, holiday meals, cocktail parties).

It's a time where holiday fitness goals go out the window. We all figure, let's just fix it all in January. Break out the bulky sweaters. Well, here's how to keep your fitness going strong all month. You'll feel more motivated, energized and come January hitting the gym won't feel so hard.



1. FOCUS ON MAINTAINING

If you don't want December to derail your holiday fitness goals, give yourself a little wiggle room. Accept that you might not lose weight during the month (if you're dieting) but maintaining your weight is no small victory!

If you're trying to build stamina, speed or another fitness goal, focus on maintaining your current status. If you build a bit, great, but even holding where you are is great. You'll be able to ramp up your training when you have more time.

Taking on a huge goal (like losing 10 pounds) might be too much for a busy month. You'll get discouraged and throw in the towel early. Instead, just make it your plan to keep your progress steady and in a holding pattern for the month. Maintaining is better than backsliding.

2. PLAN ACTIVE HOLIDAY FUN

Find ways to incorporate movement and exercise into your holiday activities. For example, the Milwaukee Art Museum offers yoga at the museum once a month and the museum in your town may have a similar program. It's something different and offers the option of seeing the sites downtown and enjoying the festive holiday atmosphere.

Go walking at your local mall and do your window shopping crowd-free before the stores open. Scope out gifts and get exercise. Walk downtown and enjoy holiday windows, lights and displays. Look at ice-skating opportunities in your city (does it get any more festive than ice-skating?) and enjoy holiday walks, hikes and active games. When you go to holiday concerts and parties, dance!

3. SCHEDULE WORKOUTS

If you want to keep up your workouts, schedule them on your calendar and hold them as sacred as any other appointment. Write them down and don't let other plans derail them. Even if you're simply making an appointment to spend time on your basement treadmill, hold to it!

Sign up for a class (not all the classes, just one weekly class) so you feel obliged to show up to your gym at least once a week. Pick something new, different or fun. You don't need to take on a big challenging new endeavor. Try a beginner option.

4. SIGN UP FOR A WINTER RACE

I love winter races. We've done several and even though it's cold (we once ran in -3 degrees) it's still fun to bundle up and run. The race atmosphere is very motivating. Even if you sign up for a run in January or February it will give you a goal to work toward and keep you moving through the month of December.

To train for cold weather running, plan an occasional outdoor run. If you've trained only indoors it's quite a shocker to try to run in frigid temps. Your muscles will cramp up and you'll be sore. Instead, plan an outdoor run on the weekend, mid-day when it's warmest. An occasional outdoor run will help you keep your pavement legs.

5. JOIN A FITNESS CHALLENGE

Ecology Runner is offering a Fit-Mas Challenge (join at any time)! This challenge is simply a fun way to keep everyone going during the winter months. You can connect on our Facebook group and keep track of your fitness goals while you cheer others on.

Find a challenge or create a group with friends. Challenge your family to a holiday fitness plan, to see if you can keep everyone moving throughout December. Participating in a group is a great way to connect and hold yourself accountable.

6. FIND AN ACCOUNTABILITY-BUDDY

Similar to participating in a fitness group, finding a friend to hold you accountable will help you stick to your guns during the holiday season. Ask a friend to workout with you once a week or meet you for a fitness class. Go for a walk with your coworker at lunch each day. Check in weekly with a buddy to tell them your progress.

Honestly, sometimes just knowing you have to answer to someone else is enough to keep you on track. Most of us don't want to admit when we've slacked off, especially to a friend who will call you out. So, pick a pal who's straightforward and who won't be afraid to push you (but who will also cheer you on).

7. GET EXCITED ABOUT LOOKING GOOD AT HOLIDAY PARTIES

Knowing you're facing people you only see a few times per year, is also good motivation. We all want to walk into a party feeling our best, whether you're dressed up in cocktail attire or an ugly Christmas sweater. Rock that holiday outfit by keeping yourself in top form.

Plan to dress up on New Year's Eve or for another activity on the horizon. Get excited about looking and feeling your best at holiday soirees. When we dress up and put effort into our looks, we often feel more confident and energized. When you look good you feel good.

8. START YOUR RESOLUTION NOW

Knowing we'll fix things or make up for slacking off when January 1st rolls around, gives us an excuse to slack for the month of December. No more excuses! Start your resolution NOW, today.

Write it down and figure out what you need to do to start strong. Why wait and then face a month of damage to undo? There's no time like the present. There's no rule that says we have to wait until New Year's Day to start our goals. The gym will be empty, so now's the time to do it!

Make this the holiday season you tackle your fitness goals and move forward rather than backsliding. Even if you simply hold out where you are, consider it worthy of celebration! After all, it's more challenging to maintain your fitness over the holidays, but you can do it! Employ these smart strategies to keep you strong into the new year.

* <https://www.ecologyrunner.com/holiday-fitness-goals/>