

Fun Fact of the Week

10 Winter Fitness Activities for the Whole Family*

It's time to play outside! Bundle up for these winter-only activities to torch calories and have a little fun.

Baby, it's cold outside! But don't let the deep freeze discourage you from getting outside and getting active. If you dress properly - in layers, taking care to protect your hands, feet, and ears - and if you choose fitness activities that are fun, you and your family can actually look forward to working out in winter, says Alice Burron, MS, a member of the Wyoming Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, an American Council on Exercise spokeswoman, and author of *Four Weeks to Fabulous*.

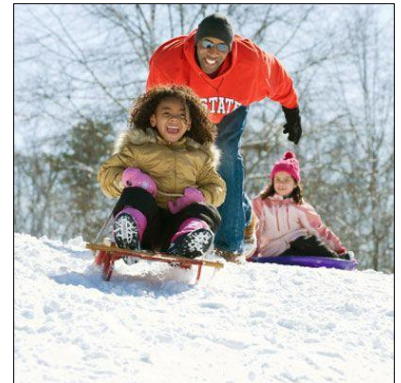
"Winter activities, particularly when there's snow on the ground, are good for strengthening 'balance' muscles because of the uneven, slick surface," Burron says. "What a great way to get your core muscles - the key to stabilizing your entire body - in shape for the spring." And, underneath all those layers, you can burn some serious calories. Below are 10 fun winter fitness activities for you and your family to choose from, and the calories you can burn, based on a 150-pound person and Everyday Health's [My Calorie Counter](#).



Sledding

Head to your local sledding hill (provided there's snow) for a fun, aerobic workout. Sledding requires you to use multiple muscle groups to steer as you speed down hills. You also exert effort while walking with your sled back up the hill, so you can go down again. In fact, walking uphill is where you get the most benefit — climbing hills is an aerobic exercise that's also great for your leg muscles.

How many calories you burn with this family fitness activity depends on how many back-and-forth trips you make and the steepness of the hill, but if you keep at it on a medium-height hill for just 30 minutes, you can burn about 240 calories.



Cross-Country Skiing

Because you're using both your upper and lower body, cross-country skiing is one of the most effective winter workouts. As any skier can tell you, it's hard work, and a terrific calorie burner.

A 150-pound person can zap about 340 calories in just 30 minutes of cross-country skiing. Another advantage of this family fitness activity is that you can do it in a nearby park — you don't have to hit the slopes, which can be pricey.

Ice Skating

Ice skating is another winter exercise that's great for family fitness. As with skiing, how fast and how long you skate will determine how many calories you ultimately burn.

A 150-pound person can burn about 240 calories in 30 minutes of rounding the rink at a respectable speed. One advantage to ice skating over skiing is that it's not as costly a fitness activity — most rinks will rent you skates if you don't have your own, and some rinks only charge the cost of skate rental.

Snowshoeing

Snowshoeing is another winter fitness activity that offers a total-body workout plus great fun for family fitness. Snowshoeing will strengthen your leg muscles while getting your heart pumping and oxygen going to your lungs.

At moderate speeds, figure that a 150-pound person will roast about 270 calories every 30 minutes.

Downhill Skiing

Although lift tickets and other costs make downhill skiing a more expensive winter exercise option, it is a great fitness activity that can be fun for your whole family.

It's not as intense a calorie burner as cross-country skiing, but you still end up burning many calories - a 150-pound person will torch about 240 calories for every 30 minutes of skiing downhill. Most ski enthusiasts do it for hours at a time, so the calorie burn can really add up.

Playing in the Snow

It snowed, the kids are out of school, and you can't get to work. Make the most of it by bundling up the family for play in the snow.

You can burn anywhere from 200 to 400 calories an hour with this family fitness activity, depending on how high you build your snowmen. Some more snow activities to try: Build a fort, have an old-fashioned snowball fight, and make snow angels. Playing in the snow is certainly more fun than shoveling it, but you can torch 200 to 300 calories for every 30 minutes you spend clearing your driveway.

Snow Tubing

Sometimes the simplest activities are the best: Add tubing to your winter routine, and your family will have a blast barreling down hills on top of rubber tubes. The advantage to snow tubing is that you don't need any of the coordination or balance skills that skiing or even ice skating requires. Everyone in your family, no matter how small or how tall, can enjoy snow tubing.

As with sledding, the calorie burn for a 150-pound person is about 200 to 300 for every 30 minutes, depending on how many times you go up and down a hill. At winter resorts that offer tubing, you'll get the best cardio workout and burn the most calories if you walk back up the mountain rather than take the ski lift.



Touch Football

Football can be a great family fitness activity to do as the weather turns colder. Fortunately, you don't need snow to round up players and start making plays.

With football, you'll be running and tackling and likely burning 200 to 300 calories every half-hour. If you're worried about safety, with family members of all shapes and sizes participating in the game, make it touch football or tag football rather than the traditional tackle game.



Walking or Running

Walking is a year-round exercise and a fitness activity the whole family can enjoy. Go for a walk in the winter to see how your neighbors have decorated their homes for the holidays or to collect pinecones in a nearby park.

Walk just 3 miles an hour, and you can burn 112 calories in a half hour. Step it up to a jog and you can easily blast 200 to 300 calories in 30 minutes. Walking can be difficult in snow, cautions Burron. Some family fitness safety tips: Rub the bottoms of your boots with sandpaper or screw some hex screws into the soles to decrease your risk of falling. Because there's limited daylight in the winter, wear reflective clothing if you plan to be out early in the morning or late in the evening.

Ice Hockey

As a winter exercise, ice hockey has similar health benefits to ice skating. Gather a few friends together to play, and some friendly competition may keep you skating longer — and the longer you skate, the more calories you burn.

Figure about 200 calories for a 20-minute period if you weigh about 150 pounds. Before you skate, ensure everyone wears appropriate protective gear, even if you're at a rink.

