




Full Potential

Physical Therapy

Happy New Year

January 2022



TIPS TO STAY ACTIVE DURING THE WINTER MONTHS

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TIPS TO STAY ACTIVE DURING THE WINTER MONTHS

Just because it is winter, it doesn't mean you have to stay indoors! It is easy to want to stay in, nestled up in blankets, while it's snowy and cold. However, remaining active in the winter months is just as important as remaining active during any other season!

The winter presents several fun activities that can double as workouts. Even something as small as taking a walk around the neighborhood to look at holiday lights or building a snowman with your kids can give you the amount of daily exercise you need.

At Full Potential Physical Therapy, we can design specialized treatment plans for anyone who may need a little extra push in staying active during the winter. Contact us today to learn more!

What are the benefits of exercising during the winter?

It is an undeniable fact that daily exercise is an important part of staying healthy and promoting wellness. It seems easier to get up and exercise when it is warm out, but there is actually evidence to support the benefits of working out in the cold. Depending on the type of workout, exercising in colder weather can actually have a more positive effect on the body than exercising in the heat.

According to a study titled "Exercise in the cold," found in the Journal of Sports Sciences, temperatures hovering around 50 degrees Fahrenheit are optimal for high or moderate intensity workouts. Conversely, low intensity workouts are better performed indoors during colder months, as sufficient metabolic heat may not be generated well enough to offset the cooler environment.

Exercise also helps loosen muscles that may become stiff in the winter months, making it easier to maneuver around in your orthotic or prosthetic device. Additional benefits to winter exercising include:

- **Sunlight intake. Vitamin D is important!** Many people lack Vitamin D in the winter, due to a scarcity of desire to venture out in the cold. However, simply stepping outside can have positive effects. Sunlight can act as a natural mood booster, which may even increase motivation to exercise.
- **Absence of heat/humidity.** Too much heat or humidity can sometimes feel suffocating. During colder months, this isn't an issue. In fact, exercising in the cold can feel invigorating, as the crisp air can increase your energy. You run out of breath

(Continued Inside)



AVOID FALLS THIS WINTER

easier when it is hot and humid, so when that is taken away, you may be able to work out for longer periods of time.

- **Immune system boost.** According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, even just a few minutes of outdoor exposure during the winter can help prevent against both bacterial and viral infections.

Avoiding falls in the winter:

While exercise in the winter is important, icy walkways unfortunately pose a higher risk of falling. This can lead to a higher risk of injury, such as strains, sprains, and tears. At Full Potential Physical Therapy, we want to make sure you stay as balanced this winter, so you can enjoy doing the activities of the season without fearing a harsh fall!

There are some steps you can take on your own to decrease your risk of sustaining a fall-related injury while participating in winter activities. These include:

- Choose shoes with winter soles for traction. You can also get a pair of ski or walking poles to help keep your balance. As an added bonus, these poles will also help you burn extra calories since your upper body is getting a workout too.
- Add slip-on spikes to your boots on the extra icy days, to reduce your risk of slips and falls.
- Allow at least 10 minutes to warm up when exercising in the winter. When it's cold, your heart and muscles need more time to get ready and prepare for exercise



- this can help you avoid unwanted injuries.

- No matter what winter activity or exercise you're partaking in, warm-ups should always include a combination of low-intensity movements that will make the physical activity easier to perform. For example, if you decide to go on a walk or run through the winter wonderland that your street has become, you could warm up with lunges, squats, arm swings, or jumping jacks, making sure to also get a good stretch in your calves and thighs. This will keep your body warm while you exercise and will be a good way for you to feel out the terrain beforehand to see if it's too icy.
- Add in any additional assists, as needed. Snow and ice are the main culprits for many injuries during the wintertime, which is why it is important to add to your stability. Ice cleats or rubber-soled boots can provide you with grip and support. Using a cane or crutch can also help in remaining steady on frozen terrain. Our trained CPOs can help you figure out if an additional assist would benefit you.



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PHYSICAL THERAPY

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WHO IS FULL POTENTIAL?

That is a great question and the answer can be found in the patient success story of this newsletter. It is true that our staff is very friendly and will help you to feel comfortable in this new experience. We listen, we are interested in you and all of the big and small things that contribute to us understanding your unique needs. We do not treat like a McDonald's makes burgers, we treat you as an individual with your specific needs and goals. We explain our findings from the exam and the plan so you become a partner in the process of getting better. Camille's success story confirms all of the above.

Truth in marketing is best confirmed by those who actually know, those who actually have received our care and this review really answers the question – Who is Full Potential PT? We are an organization that cares about your wellbeing as Camille so perfectly articulated! Thank you Camille!!

If you want to read more stories about our patient's success in overcoming a problem, go to our website and check out our testimonials or see our reviews on our Google business page. If you are in pain, take action – the holidays are coming!

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Has your pain come back? We can help! Call us at 616-392-2172 to book your appointment today!

CAN YOUR BALANCE BE TREATED?

This time of year is often considered a season of joy and celebration, but it can also bring fear to some because of the ice and snow covering the ground. If the thought of the inclement weather ahead has you concerned about your balance or makes you fearful of falling, keep reading! There are many things you can do to improve your balance. Your balance system can be trained, just as your strength, flexibility, and cardiovascular systems can be.

You could benefit from balance training if you:

- feel unsteady when sitting, standing, or walking
- are over the age of 65
- have a sedentary lifestyle
- have fallen or are fearful of falling
- have stiff joints or tight muscles
- have decreased eyesight
- have weak muscles
- have vestibular (inner ear) problems
- have leg or foot pain or decreased sensation
- have decreased walking speed
- have difficulty getting up from furniture or out of vehicles
- are nervous about going up and down stairs or stepping off of curbs

How is your balance trained?

Your balance can be trained by “working out” your balance system! Your balance system is composed of your proprioceptive system, your vestibular (inner ear) system, and your visual system. Together these systems work to keep your body’s position stable in space whether you’re standing still, moving, or are in an unstable environment such as on uneven ground or on a moving object such as an escalator. Each system can become stronger or more efficient with proper training.

Your proprioceptive system relies upon sensory feedback about pressure and position from your joints and muscles. That feedback gives you awareness of your body’s position or posture while in both stable and unstable situations. Once you are aware of the position in your environment, your body can react and respond in a way that allows you to remain balanced. With specific training, this proprioceptive process can become more efficient so that your reaction time is improved, allowing you to adapt more quickly in various situations. This can help prevent you from slipping and falling in icy or wet conditions.

Your vestibular and visual systems can also be trained. Exercises to train these systems involve various head and eye movements along with various balance tasks. These systems can be trained with help from a physician or a physical therapist. You should attend regular checkups to ensure that your eyes, inner ear, and other body systems are healthy and working as they should.

You can also feel more balanced and stable when you have strong muscles, good movement of your joints and muscles, and good physical endurance. Maintaining an active lifestyle can help with these things.

How can physical therapy help?

A physical therapist (PT) can evaluate you to determine which aspects of your balance system are weak or if you’re at risk of a fall. PTs are also trained to assess things such as your muscular strength, your coordination, flexibility, and your movement patterns and posture. They may also look at your lifestyle, home set up or use of an assistive device to determine if there are any aspects that might be contributing to your feelings of instability on your feet. After that, a PT can then develop an individualized treatment program for you. This treatment program often consists of appointments and a home exercise program.

Common physical therapy interventions for balance problems include muscle strengthening and flexibility exercises, balance and coordination training, visual and vestibular training, postural education, patient education, fall prevention training, and activity recommendations. Your balance on steps and with transitions can be improved by improving the strength of the muscles of your trunk and legs. Flexibility exercises may help with your head, hip, or ankle movement to help your body respond and move to remain balanced. Coordination or gait training can help you learn how to move more smoothly and with good mechanics to limit your chances of injury. Fall prevention training could include strategies to help you transition from vehicles or furniture, ways to modify your home to make it safer such as removing objects that could cause you to trip, or even fall recovery strategies. A PT or a PTA (physical therapist assistant) could also instruct you in how to begin or progress an exercise regimen.

What are some other ways you can be safer this winter?

You can also be safer this winter by choosing to wear warm well-fitting footwear with good traction, use salt generously on all sidewalks and driveways, regularly remove snow from walkways to prevent heavy buildup of snow or ice, and use good lighting and railings to help with your awareness of your foot placement on stairs.

As well, something that is so obvious it gets overlooked relates to where you are keeping your attention as you are in risky situations. Thinking about something other than what we are doing such as when we get out of the shower, go down stairs, or walk out of doors is a sure way to up your odds of a fall. This is especially true of the winter months where conditions change daily or even hourly. Changing conditions require us to be attentive to the change and so be able to avoid a slippery step or patch of ice. Stress, pain, and our daily problems can keep us from focusing on the task at hand and often play a role in an unexpected accident.

Whether it’s winter or summer, every season has its challenges. Be physically ready for these changing conditions by reaching to Full Potential, we can identify your unique needs and improve them. What can you do right now to help avoid a fall? Keep your attention on what you are doing, that is huge in the world of ice, snow, holes, kid’s toys and all the ways we can see the problem coming before it is a problem.

If you’re noticing that your footing doesn’t feel as stable and are concerned about your balance, consider seeing a PT at Full Potential Physical Therapy! Your balance can be improved and we’d love to work with you to help you feel more confident on your feet.

Katie Tschirhart, DPT.



5 SIMPLE TIPS FOR SHOVELING SNOW

Snow shoveling can lead to a number of health risks for many people, from back injuries to heart attacks. The following tips can help keep you safer when you set out to shovel:

- 1. Warm up.** Warm your muscles before heading out to shovel by doing some light movements, such as bending side to side or walking in place.
- 2. Push rather than lift.** Pushing the snow with the shovel instead of lifting can help reduce the strain on your body.
- 3. Lighten your load.** Consider using a lighter-weight plastic shovel instead of a metal one to help decrease the weight being lifted.
- 4. Consider multiple trips.** Consider shoveling periodically throughout the storm to avoid having to move large amounts of snow at once.
- 5. Keep up with snowfall.** Try to shovel snow shortly after it falls, when it is lighter and fluffier. The longer snow stays on the ground, the wetter it can become. Wet snow is heavier and harder to move.



BE SURE TO REWARD
YOURSELF WHEN
YOU'RE DONE!

EXERCISE ESSENTIALS



FOUR POINT + ARM RAISE

Start on hands and knees, hips and shoulders at 90°. Lift one arm out front. Bring it back down and then repeat on opposite side. 8-10 times on both arms.

Helps With Tightness In The Neck And Shoulders

PATIENT ★★★★★ SUCCESS STORY

"All staff here was super polite, friendly and professional. Dr Luke was amazing. I felt that he was very empathetic with all that was going on with my sciatic pain in my right leg. He really listened to what I had to say about the pain I was experiencing. I feel this is very rare these days. After a thorough examination, he then fully explained what the physical therapy plan would be. After working the plan in office and faithfully doing my exercises at home, I am now 100% pain free. If you have ever had sciatic pain, you know that is a blessing. Thank you to all the staff I worked with during my time at Full Potential Therapy! Also, thank you for the personal note that was sent from the office after I was done with my therapy! It was very much appreciated!"

- Camille Clark



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