



Ready or Not, Here Comes Winter

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The winter sports season is fast approaching and now is the time to get ready. It is not just getting the equipment ready, but getting our bodies physically ready as well before the season starts. Proper fitting equipment is essential for enjoyment and safety; however, not being physically ready can lead to injuries. Stretching and strengthening are important for any athlete no matter what level or sport one is participating in.

Here are a few examples of things that one should do prior to the winter sports season.

Aerobic exercise is important to help prevent injuries resulting from fatigue by maintaining overall physical endurance. Exercises such as walking, jogging or bicycling should be done for 20 to 30 minutes at least 3 times a week.

Strengthening of the legs, especially hamstrings, quads and calf muscles are very important for skiers and snowboarders. Strengthening should be alternated with aerobic exercise.

Squats also help the muscles in the legs that are used in skiing and snowboarding. These should be done in 3 sets of 10 repetitions each. From a standing position, the feet should be shoulder width apart. Bend at the hips, knees and ankles until your thighs are parallel to the floor, then return to the standing position.

Heel raises are also good for calf strengthening. These can be accomplished by standing on the floor or on a low step. Rise up onto your toes and slowly lower yourself back down. These should also be performed in 3 sets of 10 repetitions each.

Stretching is recommended before an activity because it helps loosen muscles and provides flexibility. Stretches should be held for 30 seconds. A person should feel a slow, steady stretch for the 30 seconds. These should not be done with a bouncing motion as this is very hard on the muscles and does not allow them to stretch properly.

Examples are:

Quad Stretch: With one hand holding onto the back of a chair for balance, reach behind and grab the foot of the leg you want to stretch with the other hand and bring it towards your buttocks. You should feel this stretch in the front of your thigh and knee. Hold for 30 seconds.

Hamstring Stretch: The hamstring stretch needs to be done in a controlled fashion because it may put too much stress on the back of the knee. Place the back of your heel of the leg you want to stretch on an ottoman or chair. Bending at the hips, lean forward and slowly reach towards your toes until you feel a stretch in the back of your thigh. Hold and relax in that position for 30 seconds for a good stretch.

Calf Stretch: Place the ball of your foot on the edge of a stair. Let the rest of the foot hang down over the edge. Lower the heel below the level of the stair moving slowly and controlling the stretch. You should feel a stretch from the heel up through the calf. Hold for 30 seconds.

Have a safe and fun winter!