

## Schussing into Shape

Skiing and Snowboarding are two activities for the brave at heart. While so many people dread being outside during the winter months there are those of us who have not forgotten all of the wonderful benefits that we gain from the crisp fresh air and heart pounding nature of outdoor activities. Skiing and snowboarding are two of the most invigorating and challenging activities that come to mind.

In the case of skiing and boarding the challenges are: getting to the mountain, fighting what could be less than optimal weather conditions or getting down unseen dangerous terrain. Fortunately, the rewards reaped from a day on the slopes (especially a sunny day with fresh snow) makes all the challenges above pale in comparison. Winter sports can help adults and children achieve health and fitness and snow sports specifically are an excellent way to maintain a fitness program during the winter because they help develop aerobic capacity and muscle strength, not to mention burn calories. Plus, skiing and boarding appeals to a lot of families because it's something they can do together, whether for winter weekends or a week's vacation.

According to "Winter Feels Good," downhill skiing improves muscle tone for the whole body, as well as increasing balance and endurance. (WinterFeelsGood.org) Other interesting fitness facts about skiing include:

- Downhill skiing enables skiers to raise and maintain their heart rates for at least 15 minutes which in turn increases delivery of oxygen to muscles.
- Skiing is also an anaerobic exercise that increases strength and ability to sustain short bursts of exertion. Skiing bumps and short-radius turns all rely on power and stamina.
- Skiing relies on coordination, balance and flexibility, benefits that allow for a more dynamic range of motion and ultimately, a better technique.
- Downhill skiing works the leg muscles, especially hamstrings and quadriceps.
- Abdominal muscles are used to control body posture during each run, ultimately making them stronger.
- The triceps are used for accurate and strong poling maneuvers, conditioning these muscles over time for greater fitness.
- A 130-lb adult burns approximately 295 calories/hr while a 190-lb adult burns approximately 431 calories/hr skiing downhill with light effort, while each will burn 354 calories/hr and 518 calories/hr, respectively, while skiing downhill with moderate effort, and 472 calories/hr and 690 calories/hr, respectively, while skiing with vigorous effort.

Snowboarding increases muscle tone in the lower body, while also improving balance and coordination. (WinterFeelsGood.org) Interesting snowboarding benefits include:

- Snowboarding uses a variety of muscles including the hamstrings and quadriceps to guide the board, start it in motion and to stop.
- Snowboarding requires strong calf muscles which are used to coordinate toe-side traverses down the mountain.
- Abdominal muscles are used to provide strength and stability.
- Ankle and feet muscles are used for steering and balance.
- A 110-200-lb adult burns approximately 250-630 calories/hr while snowboarding recreationally,

while a 110-200-lb adult burns approximately 700-1260 calories/hr while snowboarding competitively.

And ultimately, the better your fitness level before you arrive at the mountain, the better you are likely to perform overall. So get out of your comfort zone and stop clinging to a singular workout regimen! Stepping the StairMaster two hours a day will keep your cardiovascular system in shape, but sticking to one workout mode employs the same muscle groups over and over again. The mountain will likely call for more. To help get muscles ready for skiing or riding, vary your physical activities to stimulate different muscle groups. If you don't know how, email me and I'll help you because none of us and argue with a recently released Harvard study that showed the top seven U.S. counties with the greatest average life expectancy, 81.3 years, are all in Colorado - Clear Creek, Eagle, Gilpin, Grand, Jackson, Park and Summit. Coincidentally, these mountain communities are also home to 10 ski resorts...further proof that skiing and snowboarding help people live long and healthy lives.