

Watch list for winter weather activities

Winter weather doesn't have to derail your exercise routine, says a Saint Louis University exercise expert. As you adjust to darker days, colder temperatures, and slippery surfaces, it's important to be mindful of safety issues that come with the territory of winter workouts.

"A change in weather should bring a change to your mindset. As temperatures get colder, it's important for athletes to adjust their routines," said Dr. Tony Breitbach, director of athletic training education.

Dr. Breitbach offers the following tips to avoid injury during winter months:

- **Watch what you wear.** Dress in layers for outside exercise. Next to your skin, wear a breathable wicking material, not cotton because it retains sweat. Next, add a thermal layer of fleece or cotton to keep in heat. Use a third, outer layer as a cover. As you start to heat up, you'll be able to peel off layers to manage your comfort level.

- **Watch for pain.** Your furthest extremities are the first to be affected by the cold. If you get pain or tingling in your ears, fingers, or toes, it's time to go inside to warm up.
- **Watch your hydration.** Staying well-hydrated is another concern during cold winter months due to dry air and indoor heat. Drink plenty of fluids, but be sure to avoid caffeine and alcohol-based beverages, which also lead to dehydration.

- **Watch for hazards.** Use caution when running after dark. Wear light-colored, reflective clothing so drivers can see you.
- **Watch out for overuse.** Winter weather can limit outdoor exercise options such as running in the park, golfing, and swimming. So be careful to avoid over-doing it with one activity. Working out on hard, unforgiving surfaces like gym floors or concrete can worsen any over-use issues you have. Think outside the gym. Be creative; try ice-skating, cross-country skiing, or a yoga class.

