

Get fit before you hit the slopes

Submitted by: Arena Quantum

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LONDON, 23 December 2010 - It's that time of year to eat mince pies, drink mulled wine and be merry. And of course to fly down the mountain on your skis or snowboard! Unfortunately, the copious amounts of turkey, ham, stuffing and Christmas pudding aren't exactly beneficial for your mobility on the slopes. But you don't have to hold back during your Christmas dinner in order to enjoy your winter sports holiday to the full. If you want to avoid injuries, what really matters isn't bodyweight but muscle fitness. With a bit of dry land training, you can get all your muscles ready for action on the snow slope (<http://www.thesnowcentre.com/>).

The specialists from The Snow Centre at Hemel Hempstead have put together a list of pointers for snowsports enthusiasts to get fit before their next winter trip or their next session on the indoor slopes, so that they can make the most of their time on the snow.

1. Try running, cycling or roller-skiing for at least twenty minutes 3 to 5 times a week. These sports will build up your leg muscles while boosting your cardiovascular system. A better stamina will allow you to ski or snowboard longer and harder, and will have a great effect on your après ski performance.
2. If you've ever seen a group of newbies on the snow, this may sound like an open door, but the key to both skiing and snowboarding is being able to keep your balance. You are constantly altering your balance over your board or skis to compensate for irregularities in the snow. Boarders can improve their balance at home by standing on a mattress in the position they would take on a snowboard and transfer their weight forwards and backwards over their feet. To make the exercise more intense, they can try doing it with their eyes closed or while throwing and catching a ball against the wall. Skiers can do a similar exercise but should pretend to be standing on skis instead of a board. Skiers can also benefit a lot from doing small knee bends on one leg while keeping the knee aligned with the toes. Good balance does wonders for technique!
3. It's useful to do some strength exercises focussed on specific muscle groups in your legs. You can start with ten repetitions of each exercise every day and increase the number of reps until you're ready to hop in the car and head for the slopes:
 - a) For example, if you're not sure your quads are strong enough to hold you in the basic skiing position for a good couple of hours, you should exercise them with squats and lunges.
 - b) Your inner thighs have to keep your skis together and your outer thighs help you steer whilst keeping your balance. Train your thigh muscles with side lunges, leg lifts and inner thigh squeezes.
 - c) Your hamstrings and gluteal muscles will need to perform when you're leaning forward from the hips while skiing downhill. If you attend a gym, you can train these with dead lifts or hamstring rolls.
 - d) Your calves will be working hard to keep you upright on the snow. Since you're probably not used to standing with your knees bent, you'll be blessed with burning calves throughout most of your holiday if you don't prepare them well. A good way to target these muscles is the calf lift. Slowly lift yourself on

tiptoe with your feet in parallel position or with your heels apart and toes together.

e) And last but not least, if you don't want aching shins and feet on your holiday, you can train these by standing flat on a towel, grabbing it with your toes and curling the towel under your feet.

(Source (<http://exercise.about.com/od/healthinjuries/a/skiing.htm>))

4. It's important to stretch all your muscles after exercising them. A great way to improve your general flexibility is joining a yoga or Pilates class.

5. Be careful not to train the large muscle groups without training all the small muscles that support those bigger muscle groups, as small muscles are just as prone to injury as bigger ones are. Don't focus on the bigger muscle groups alone. Make sure you combine your strength exercises with cardiovascular training, exercises that will help you keep your balance and plenty of stretching.

-Ends-

Notes to editors

The Snow Centre, only 30 minutes outside London, boasts a BASI Centre of Excellence Status and is the most highly qualified snow sports school in the south of England. Skiers and snowboarders of all abilities are guaranteed to receive world class coaching from some of the best instructors this side of the Alps.

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