



Wellness through Outdoor Winter Programs

Intended Audience

For all members, including people living with cancer, family members and significant caregivers. Ski Day is a yearly event targeted to provide young adults and the 'young at heart' a day in the mountains.

Program Description

Wellspring offers a variety of outdoor winter programs that combine safe, healthy physical activity with the endless benefits of fresh outdoor air and full immersion in nature. Programs include Cross Country Skiing, Snowshoeing and a downhill Ski Day, and all are led by trained facilitators who know their sports well and are qualified to offer expert guidance and direction. In the case of the Cross Country Skiing program, the aim is to help member achieve comfortable, controlled maneuverability on groomed trails using light Nordic equipment. The Snowshoeing program targets walkers of all levels and takes them beyond their bounds to pathways of pristine quiet and beauty.

Benefits and Impact

Research indicates that there are both measureable and intangible benefits to being active outdoors, including improved physical, mental and emotional wellness. Wellspring's carefully designed outdoor winter programs are tailored to provide members with an opportunity to transcend their health limitations and experience invigorating activity, camaraderie, inspiration and joy in safely guided group excursions.

What to Expect at a Session

Cross-Country: After an indoor orientation session addressing clothing, equipment, waxing and the outdoor environment topics, participants meet for ski sessions at one of three locations (COP, Kananaskis or Canmore Nordic Centre). Equipment is provided free-of-charge and instruction is given to improve participants' skills and techniques. Advanced tips and encouragement are given to those who wish to participate in the many Loppets throughout Alberta.

Snowshoeing: After an indoor orientation session the group has a short snowshoe instructional session near Wellspring. Subsequent sessions involve carpooling to locations in Calgary or Kananaskis where participants can sharpen their skills while enjoying and learning about the environment. All equipment is provided free-of-charge.

Ski Day: At this annual event, young adults and other members of all ages travel together by bus to a ski destination in the mountains where they ski all day with experienced ski buddies. The small groups are formed (4 – 6 members) according to ability levels, and the ski buddy orients members to the hill, the sport and the fun! Lift tickets and rentals are prearranged at no cost to the members. A current ParQ form must be completed before registration.

What the Research Says:

Frequently reported physical and psychological benefits of aerobic activities include improved fitness, decreased fatigue and decreased depression levels. Despite this, individuals often do not meet the recommended 150 minutes of aerobic activity per week. As such, researchers surveyed 741 individuals who had breast, prostate, or colorectal cancer to determine which activities they preferred in order to create community-based physical activity programs to better suit potential participants' interests. Researchers reported that the most popular winter activities were walking, skiing, skating, and snowshoeing. (Buffart LM, Galvao DA, Brug J, Chinapaw MJM, Newton RU. 2013. Evidence-based physical activity guidelines for cancer survivors: Current guidelines, knowledge gaps and future research directions. *Cancer Treatment Reviews*, 40(2014): 327-340). (Forbes CC, Blanchard CM, Mummery WK, Courneya KS. 2015. A Comparison of Physical Activity Preference Among Breast, Prostate, and Colorectal Cancer Survivors in Nova Scotia, Canada. *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*. 12(6): 823-833.)

Program Frequency:

Multiple weeks during winter season
Optimum class size: 15

Related Programs:

Bird Strolls
Urban Nature Walks
Mindful Mountain Hiking

