

Keeping fit

Ice skating is a great winter workout

If you want to stay active this winter, consider taking up ice skating to embrace the season!

If you have always dreaded every second of winter and are used to hibernating on the couch in front of the TV, allow yourself to look forward to winter this year and every year after by taking up ice skating and joining in the fun. All you need is warm clothing that will allow your body to move freely and provide some level of protection if you should fall, a pair of skates and a positive outlook.

Ice skating started out hundreds of years ago as a mode of transportation rather than for recreation, exercise or sport. It has evolved to be done individually or as a group sport and it will enrich your health and wellness.

Ice skating is an inexpensive way to get the entire family from kids to grandparents exercising together

over the winter months. Children and adults will increase their self-confidence as they skate while improving their body control and balance. There are indoor and outdoor ice skating rinks located close to your area and you can even rent a rink for a private ice skating party such as a birthday party or a family reunion.

Winter reminds me of when I was a child ice skating and playing ice hockey with my siblings on a rink we helped my dad build in our backyard. Fond memories were created as we worked together to build, maintain and enjoy our rink. Some families may prefer to build their own backyard ice rink which can be relatively inexpensive considering the number of hours per day it could be used by the family and possibly neighbours.

Building your own ice rink will create fond memories for your family too that will last a lifetime as your family pulls together to learn how to plan, build and maintain a project that everyone can use.

Most of the equipment you would need for your own backyard rink you

most likely have in your garage already and the only additional requirement would be for several weeks of below freezing temperatures.

You will need to level off the ground from leaves, rocks, holes or anything that could puncture the ice rink liner. Then put up the perimeter, lay down the plastic liner, and fill with water. Voila, you're done! When you are finished you may want to set up outdoor lighting and purchase a hockey net or set up boards so the puck will stay in the rink.

Do you have bone or joint issues? Ice skating is a low-impact exercise that is gentle on your knees and joints unlike jogging or running. Ice skating

helps you lose weight, build muscle mass, endurance and balance as well as enhancing your mental fitness.

It is appropriate for all ages and fitness levels and provides

an excellent cardiovascular workout. To increase the levels of intensity you can simply swing your arms while you skate to get a great upper body workout as well.

The key to losing weight by skating is how much time you spend doing it, how far you skate and keeping it as continuous as possible.

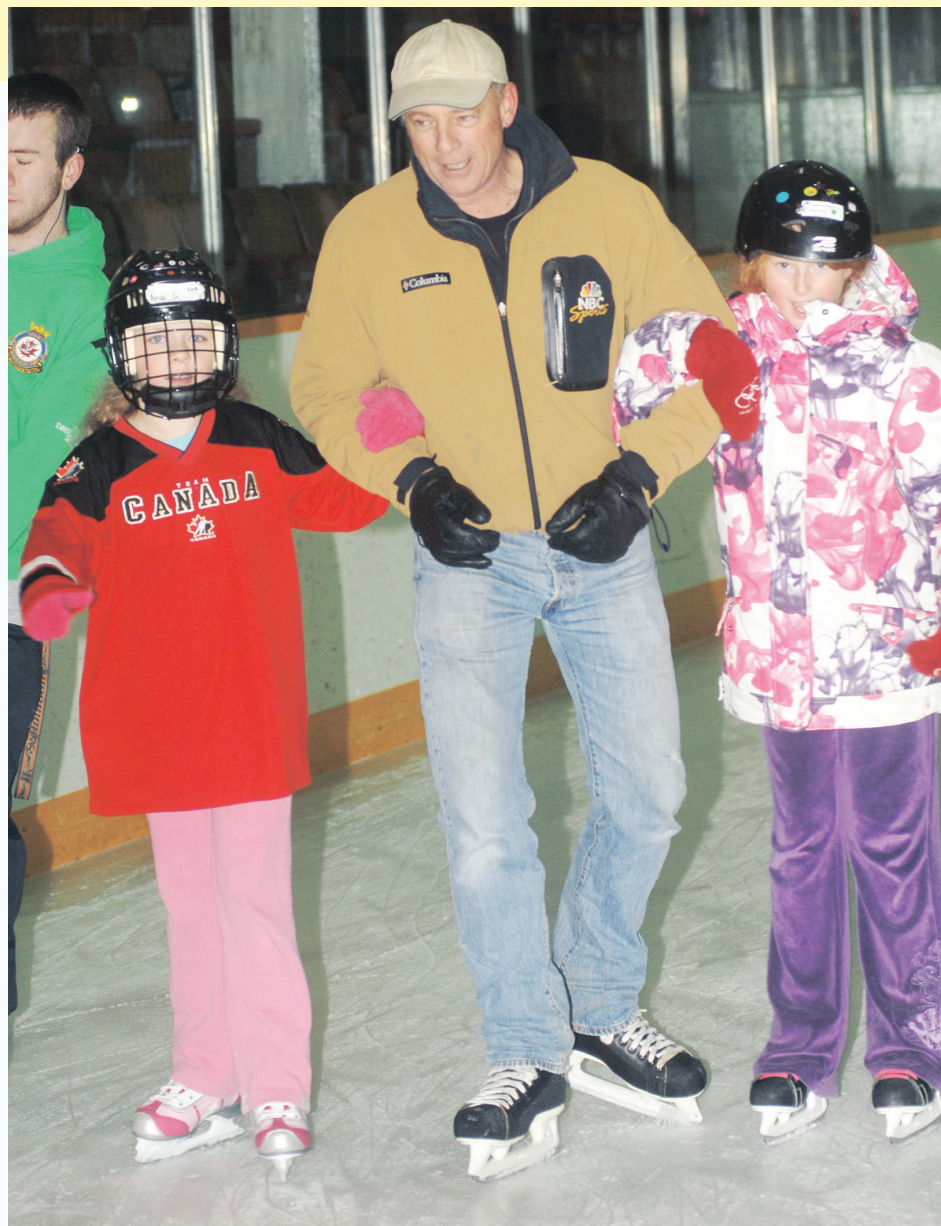
You could lose weight by skating 20 minutes, three times a week but you could lose even more if you did 40 minutes four times per week.

If you skate around the outside of the rink 10 times in a row be sure to measure the time it takes to do 10 consecutive laps and take a short break and then do 10 laps in the other direction even faster. The exhilarating part is you are challenging yourself by trying to beat your previous times making it fun while you get fit.

Remember to start slow and gradually increase your time, distance, and speed.

The major muscles worked when skating are quadriceps and hamstrings in your legs. Keep in mind your entire body will benefit from ice skating,

By
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Ice skating, either alone or with others, is an inexpensive way to keep fit during the winter months.

ing, especially your lower back and abdominals.

There are also mental benefits to ice skating; it gives you a break from the daily stressors. Exercise is a way of managing stressors; it will not eliminate them.

As you exercise you are releasing endorphins causing your mood to naturally lift and reduce the release of stress hormones making life's problems not seem so overwhelming.

Many folks teach themselves how to ice skate as it is possible to learn to skate on your own. There are many advantages to learning some tips to teach you how to ice skate safely—like learning how to fall or stop properly!

Many ice skating rinks will offer basic lessons to teach you how to skate forwards and backwards by using sculling, stroking and crossover techniques. You can also learn some handy turns to help you maneuver with ease on the ice. The most important thing you need to learn to ice skate is a good sense of humour to let embarrassment slide off your back when you fall and the courage to get back up and try again.

If you are new to skating you will use a lot of energy to just get around the rink a few times and burn a lot of calories doing so. As you continue to skate it will become easier and you will be able to skate longer during each outing as you build your strength and endurance.

Some think of endurance as “hanging tough” and “getting through” something. I think endurance is practising something until you notice an improvement over time. Believing in yourself enough to set a challenging goal and gain a new skill along the way. The good old “I can do it” frame of mind will take you there at any stage of your life.

The more patience you have and the more you practise the more graceful you will eventually be on the ice.

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