



## **Take a Walk – in snowshoes**

by Dr. Khaled Dossa

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Winter is in full swing and a great way to enjoy the outdoors is up in our beautiful mountains. For those of you who are afraid of the idea of zooming down a mountain on friction-less devices such as skis or a snowboard then snowshoeing might be an option for you. Snowshoeing is an activity that is rapidly growing in popularity and for good reason: It is affordable, easy to learn, fun and of course great for keeping fit!

Physical activities such as snowshoeing can help reduce the risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure as well as certain types of cancers. The benefits of snowshoeing are numerous and include controlling body weight, building and maintaining healthy bones, joints and muscles, developing strength and agility as well as creating a sense of psychological well being.

Snowshoeing can use approximately 8 METs (*1 MET* = the energy used by the body as you sit quietly, perhaps while talking on the phone or reading a book). Any activity that burns  $\geq 6$  METs is considered vigorous-intensity physical activity and therefore be sure to see your healthcare provider prior to commencing.

Once you have received clearance, there are certain exercises that you can do to prepare for the snow covered slopes.

- 1) Cardiovascular Training – Using a Stairmaster and Elliptical machines are a great way of building up endurance for your heart and lungs as well as muscles in your limbs such as your quadriceps and glutes which are definitely needed whilst snowshoeing. A good starting point is by using these machines 3 times per week for a duration of thirty minutes and an intensity where you can hear the sound of your breath as you exercise.
- 2) Strength Training – Snowshoeing essentially requires the use of several muscle groups in your lower and upper limbs as well as your core. A great exercise for training your legs, thighs and buttocks are lunges. Perform 10 repetitions per leg, rest and repeat twice. This exercise should be performed 3 times per week.



Your core is comprised of several muscles including your obliques which will be used considerably as you stretch your arm out whilst planting the ski pole into the ground as you advance through the snow. Working your obliques can be accomplished by doing oblique crunches as well as the sidebridge. Don't forget to work both sides of your core.

Seated rows and Lat pull downs are also effective exercises as they help generate power in each stride as your biceps and back muscles help the torso advance through the stride.

3) Stretching – This is a wonderful method of keeping your joints lubricated and muscles healthy and pliable. Make sure to stretch your body from head to toe. It only takes about 10 minutes! Stretching should be done daily.

You now have the bare essentials to begin the fun and exciting activity of snowshoeing. Remember, moderation is the key to avoiding injuries so do not do too much too quickly and, most of all, have fun up there.