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Snowmobiling provides physical and mental health benefits Winter recreation fights seasonal affective disorder

HASLETT, Mich., December 17, 2009—Staying active during the winter months can be a challenge with the icy temperature convincing you to stay nestled indoors.

Snowmobiling provides both a great physical workout and supports strong mental health.

Even though you're sitting when riding a snowmobile, this winter activity is great exercise. Snowmobiling builds a strong core, requiring strength and flexibility to maneuver on the trails. In fact, the average person burns about 238 calories per hour while snowmobiling.

Sunlight deprivation contributes to both winter weight gain and seasonal affective disorder (SAD), more commonly known as the winter blues. SAD is a form of depression in which people who have normal mental health throughout the year experience depressive symptoms during the winter months. The National Health Association estimates that 10 million Americans suffer from SAD.

In order to treat SAD, many use light therapy to mimic natural outdoor light. With light therapy, exposure to bright light from a light therapy box is thought to alter your circadian rhythms and suppress your body's natural release of melatonin causing biochemical changes in your brain that reduce symptoms of SAD. Snowmobiling provides a much more fun and easy way to get natural lighting and exercise.

On average, people spend about 90 percent of their time indoors, breathing in filtered air and mixing with other people's germs. There are even fewer people outdoors in the winter. Staying active year-round boosts your immune system and helps ward off winter colds.

For those interested in learning more about snowmobiling, www.gosnowmobiling.org is an essential tool for guidance. The site provides information on getting started in snowmobiling, dealers and renters who can supply you with a snowmobile, locations to snowmobile, and more.

ISMA is an organization representing the four manufacturers of snowmobiles. ISMA's main function is to provide and encourage policies, programs and activities to improve the lifestyle activity of snowmobiling throughout the world. It maintains strong partnerships with the Canadian Council of Snowmobile Organizations (CCSO/CCOM) and the American Council of Snowmobile Associations (ACSA). For more information, visit www.snowmobile.org. International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association, 1640 Haslett Road, Suite 170, Haslett, MI 48840.

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