

# PIR NEWSLETTER

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## Winter Hiking – Exercise While Defeating Seasonal Affective Disorder

By: Vin Ciaramella, PTA, Georgetown Clinic



Unfortunately for some, we couldn't have snowless, fifty-something degree days all winter. Along with the landscape changing, our minds and bodies do too. The National Institute of Mental Health reports that due to less natural sunlight during the winter months, some people experience seasonal affective disorder, or SAD, which may lead to symptoms such as depression, loss of interest and changes in weight.

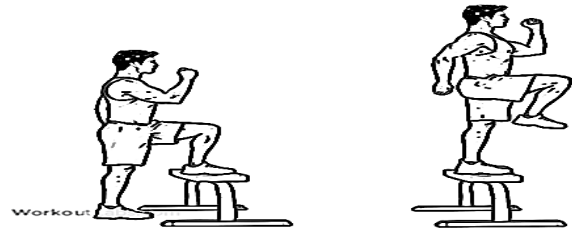
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## Spotlight Exercise: Step Ups



Step ups are a great way to strengthen your lower body and prepare it for the continual motion involved with hiking – walking. When performing this exercise, the quadriceps, hip flexors, hamstrings and gluteal muscles (buttocks) all work together to produce the motion.

- Find a sturdy platform to perform exercise. The bottom of the staircase works the best. Stand in front of the first step and place hand(s) on railing if available although it is important not to pull yourself up from the railings.
- Standing upright, place left foot onto platform and use that same leg to step up until your body rises and your left leg completely straightens.
- As your left leg straightens, kick your right leg forward until the thigh is parallel to the step while bending the knee to form a 90-degree angle with the thigh.
- After holding that position for 2-3 seconds, return the right leg back to a neutral position.
- As the right leg returns to a neutral position, step down using your left leg until your right foot is back on the ground. It is important to step down in a controlled manner to maximize the efficiency of the muscles being used.
- Perform 10 step ups with the left leg and then perform exercise with the feet reversed.
- Perform 3 sets of 10 step ups on each leg, taking a small rest (15-30 seconds) in between sets
- If not able to perform step up safely and controlled, begin on a lower platform and build up as you can tolerate progressions in height.

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Although the occasional staying in with hot cocoa is unavoidable, we need to do what our bodies were made for – to move!

A simple and inexpensive way to minimize SAD while benefitting from exercise is by hiking. Don't think you have to drive hours away from your home to hike. In Essex County alone, there are nearly a dozen state parks and forests with trails to explore and get in a workout in the process. Although hiking itself merely involves walking, some people may not be suitable to hike. Be honest with yourself and ask the following:

- Do I have trouble walking? Do I need an assistive device to get around?
- Do I have any medical condition(s) that could interfere with my ability to hike?
- Do I have a sound sense of direction and awareness?

Before one sets out to hike, it is important to plan ahead to ensure the safety of yourself and others around you. A simple checklist may involve:

- Tell others where you plan on going and roughly what time you should be back.
- Check the weather forecast.
- Pack a small backpack with items such as water, snacks, extra socks, hat and gloves, extra shirt.
- Wear a sturdy shoe / boot that is made for outdoor environments.
- Dress in layers so you can easily shed a layer if you begin to sweat, or add a layer for extra warmth.
- Use ski poles or a walking stick to provide extra points of contact with the ground, increasing stability.

Though it is not a guarantee you will get lost while in the woods, a simple map will help you out a lot when confronted with trails that split off. Free, printable maps of local parks can be found at:

<http://www.mass.gov/trail-maps-generic>

As you begin to hike, don't feel like you have to walk at a certain pace to 'get it over with'. The key to hiking is to enjoy the experience at ones' own pace while being completely aware of your surroundings and your body. You will begin to sweat fairly soon, so shed a layer because sweating excessively in the winter can lead to hypothermia. Ensure your muscles stay hydrated and avoid cramping by drinking plenty of water. Avoid fatigue by taking breaks when needed. Stretch along the way to decrease the tissue tension that is built up along the hike. Some simple stretches include:

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- Standing calf stretch: Stand in front of a tree with hands placed on it, extend one leg behind your body and gently lean forward, bending the opposite knee until a stretch is felt in the leg that is behind you. Hold for at least 30 seconds, 3-5 times per leg.
- Standing hamstring stretch: Find a rock or stump that is about or slightly below waist level and place one leg onto it. Keeping that leg straight, gently lean your body and trunk forward until a stretch is felt in the back of the leg. Hold for at least 30 seconds, 3-5 times per leg.
- Standing quadriceps stretch: While leaning onto a tree for support, grab an ankle and pull your foot towards your buttock until a stretch is felt in the front of your thigh. To add in a hip flexor stretch, extend your leg back further until a stretch is felt in the groin area. Hold for at least 30 seconds, 3-5 times per leg.

At some point you may experience the effects of seasonal affective disorder, but it doesn't mean there is nothing you can do about it. Hiking outside provides more natural light than being indoors, has proven to reduce depression and a way to burn hundreds of calories in the process. Plan ahead, be prepared and have fun this winter through hiking.

### Sources:

- <https://medlineplus.gov/seasonalaffecteddisorder.html>
- <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/masssparks/places-to-go/trail-maps-generic.html>
- [http://workoutlabs.com/wp-content/uploads/watermarked/Step\\_up\\_with\\_Knee\\_Raise.png](http://workoutlabs.com/wp-content/uploads/watermarked/Step_up_with_Knee_Raise.png)



## **The Power of Hope: It's the catalyst for positive change.**

*By: Brad Cooper, PT, MSPT, MBA*

As a physical therapist (PT) or physical therapist assistant (PTA) who's looking to integrate wellness services into your practice, you may be struggling with the "chicken or the egg" question.

That is, you may look at a patient or client who has significant health issues and wonder which risk factor came first and precipitated a downward spiral. Or, you may determine that a descent already was in progress, exacerbating related risks.

Recently, during a huddle of our team of wellness coaches, we engaged in this very discussion. One participant cited obesity as the cause of broader health issues in a particular individual whose case we were dissecting. That observation certainly was correct. Another coach looked at the situation from a different angle, arguing that underlying depression had caused poor eating patterns and a lack of exercise that resulted in the patient's obesity. That point was valid, too. A third participant in the discussion opined that the root cause of the patient's health issues was insufficient sleep. That, she argued, had driven the patient's depression, poor diet, sedentary lifestyle, and subsequent obesity.

All 3 analyses had substantial merit. When that's the case, though, where is a PT or PTA to start in helping a patient or client with multiple risk factors move toward better health and wellness? It's a quandary, all right. Until, that is, you realize that you're asking the wrong question.

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## PIR 2016 Patient Testimonials

At Partners In Rehab, PT we value our patients feedback and appreciate hearing how they feel about the services they received after they have completed treatment at one of our facilities. Over the past year we have received some of the best patient testimonials, praising the services they received here at PIR, so we wanted to share a few of them with you:

*"The staff at PIR is professional, knowledgeable, friendly, and respectful to patient's issues & concerns. Facility is well equipped. I wish I could have started PT earlier when I was really experiencing painful symptoms. I do believe these sessions have helped me overall as I am not experiencing symptoms of pain anymore."* **Lorgino G. - Methuen Clinic**

*"Everyone at Partners In Rehab, PT was knowledgeable, friendly, helpful, courteous, & caring. I couldn't work without experiencing severe pain, now I'm 99% pain free thank to Steve, Caroline, & staff. Chris & Karen were so welcoming. Thanks to you all!"* **Barbara L. - Georgetown Clinic**

*"I strongly recommend PIR to anyone. The staff is SO friendly, accommodating, & knowledgeable. I have been to other places in the past & this is where I will do PT going forward. A special thanks to Kristin & Krista for their knowledge, professionalism, & nice way about them. Also, Tina is fantastic."* **Michele W. - Saugus Clinic**

If you have been a patient of Partners In Rehab, PT and would like to share your thoughts about the treatment you received or regarding your overall experience then please visit our website at [www.partnersinrehab.com](http://www.partnersinrehab.com) and click on the **Patient Survey** tab on the home page. At Partners In Rehab, PT we are dedicated to helping our patients **HEAL BETTER. MOVE BETTER. FEEL BETTER.** & by sharing your feedback we can guarantee to continue doing so for many more years. - Thank You

You've heard the saying, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink?" When it comes to providing wellness services to patients and clients, there's an important corollary: What you can do is make him thirsty!

If behavior change in the wellness arena is to be lasting and meaningful, it must be driven and sustained by the individual in question. Our job is to make that person thirst for positive change by helping to identify the things that matter most in his or her life, then providing that individual with the support, resources, and framework of accountability he or she needs to make those goals into realities.

Obesity? Depression? Lack of exercise? Poor eating habits? For many patients and clients, those and other risk factors revolve in what threatens to become a permanent cycle. There is a critical component, however, that we can bring to the table (in addition to our expertise in human movement). What we can and must offer patients and clients, as they embark or continue on their wellness journey, is hope.

When hope is lacking, you're unlikely to see any positive long-term change in an individual's health and wellness. Hope is what provides the spark – to exercise when the flesh may be weak, to will the spirit to say "yes" to good food choices when bad ones are more readily available, to break old habits that would be so very easy to indulge.

PTs and PTAs are by nature optimistic people. We're all about helping others optimize their potential. We're certainly never discouraging. But, are we always as hopeful as we might be in motivating patients and clients toward achievement of their most-cherished personal goals? That's the question we should be asking.

*PT in Motion, APTA's official member magazine, is the successor to PT – Magazine of Physical Therapy, which published 1993-2009. All links within articles reflect the URLs at the time of publication and may have expired.*

<http://www.apta.org/PTinMotion/2015/10/WellToDo/>