

# Stay Healthy This Winter

## *Snowmobiling Good For Health*

### **Snowmobiling provides physical and mental health benefits**

Winter recreation fights seasonal affective disorder

(Dec 1, 2009 – Haslett, MI) Staying active during the winter months can be a challenge with the icy temperature convincing many to stay nestled indoors. Snowmobiling provides both a great physical workout and supports strong mental health.

Even though you're often 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 North American residents 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 stale 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.

To combat the threats posed by today's indoor, inactive lifestyles – such as the growing obesity epidemic, several hundred organizations have teamed up to promote outdoor recreation. This United States national effort is led by the U.S. Forest Service. The mission of the effort is to:

*Unify public and private-sector interests in efforts to influence American lifestyles, in ways that maximize the physical, mental and other benefits derived from activities in the Great Outdoors.*

The National effort is simply called – **GO Day**. In the snowmobiling world, we call it **Go Snowmobiling**. We encourage you to invite your friends and family members to get outside and go snowmobiling. The enthusiasm is catchy!

For those interested in learning more about snowmobiling, [www.gosnowmobiling.org](http://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.