

FIT FOR LIFE with Carol Westmorland

Welcome the winter weather – it could help you get fit

With an unwillingness to suffer a repeat of last winter, Bertie Beetle, my beloved car, has been shod with winter tyres in the vain hope of being able to negotiate the toboggan run of Croglin and beyond.

Embracing the Snow Queen within me, I am all for being invigorated by icy blasts when it comes to it and there is no better way than here in our part of the world.

I refuse to turn blue, so while two of us layer up every known extremity, the other two, Mischa and Truly Scrumptious, bounce about impatiently in their very smart and practical fur coats – clever things. Time-consuming but rather wonderful, layering will keep you toasty.

You must also avoid exercising in the freezing cold if you haven't eaten. With winter temperatures their best at midday, an ideal time to go out for a hike is half an hour after your lunch when your body is known to generate 10 per cent more heat. If you head out and begin to shiver you are potentially burning up to 400 calories an hour to try to stay warm and that will just sap your energy – energy you need to have fun. For anyone thinking that sounds like a very good way to burn calories, think again; it is not attractive being seen as the one who can't keep up.

Bounding into untouched snow is something that is actually very hard work. Pushing through the snow shortens your stride which limits the ability of your hip to drive your knee forward, putting extra work into your hamstrings, the muscle at the back of your thigh. On lighter snow



and ice, your bigger muscles allow the smaller, stabilising muscles to take over to protect your ankles and your knees. You will find yourself re-acquainted with some long-lost muscle groups. You may not yet know where your adductor muscle is but following a snowy trek you soon will.

Ideally, get off part-treated pathways and roads and retreat and explore the open fells along marked bridleways.

Lower ground, when covered in untouched snow, is much easier to negotiate; you avoid the usual roughness underfoot. Snow can hide tree roots, and compacted ice, so still practice care.

The forests in winter are breathtaking in thick snow – everything is insulated and the silence is beautiful, but unless you want to land on your hands and knees, wearing yellow-tinted lenses can help you see the relief.

Remember to increase your time out gradually. It is also important to loosen up when you get home; preferably in front of a roaring fire, mulled wine and a mince pie. Traditionally this would involve some stretching but while still in the festive mood you could, of course, stretch out on the sofa! This will prevent aches and muscle-shortening and aid your relaxed state of mind.

With any spare energy, be neighbourly and get your shovel out or create a work of art in the shape of a snowman.

Welcome it all. It's not the bleak mid-winter, instead, it is our wonderful, magnificent Lake District in all its glory.

An ice axe between my father and the slopes of Skiddaw stopped him slip, sliding away one New Year's Day. You may not need an ice axe for your adventures but do take care and stay intact. I wish you all health and happiness in our new year.

■ Carol Westmorland lives in the Eden Valley. She is a Cycling Time Trials national champion, clocking up 445 miles in 24 hours. She also teaches pilates. www.pilates-cumbria.co.uk

LIFE COACH with Marion Dunlop

Resolution or re-solution in 2011?

It's that time of year again. A time of letting go of the old and embracing the new. So what have you decided to change after all the festive reflection – drink less; exercise more; new partner? If you're going to be successful with any new goal, make sure what you want is realistic and achievable. To maximise your motivation start with a small change which you have a good chance of completing. Set a clear action plan with a time beside it and get active with your diary so your actions

are there "looking" at you.

Make sure this is something you want to do for you – you must take ownership of such changes and control it from the start.

Become aware of the conversation in your head when you are trying to keep on track. We have internal chatter going on all the time – notice any self-defeating chat and change it to something positive and encouraging. To succeed you need to become your own best friend and coach. There's no such thing

as "failure" – everything is a learning opportunity to develop ways of doing things differently next time!

Another useful approach is to visualise yourself having achieved the end result – slim; fit; gorgeous; happy; active – whatever it is you're working on. The joy of our unconscious mind is that when you give it positive ideas and images, things begin to happen to help you keep the commitment to yourself.

Remember you have all the information and a lifetime of

experience to call on. Chances are you know exactly how to get those good things happening. Perhaps you've tried before and whatever the result was back then you have valuable learning to apply to make success happen differently this time – hence 'Re-solution'. It's time to recognise that you're worth the effort!



■ Marion Dunlop is a Carlisle-based life coach and therapist www.cumbriatherapies.com