

How to hit the slopes strong, avoid injuries

By Paul McHugh, Sacramento Bee

Had your skis or board freshly tuned? Good. Layered clothes, helmet and sunscreen all packed? Check. Car ready with new wipers, antifreeze fluid, tire chains in the trunk? Great. But let's consider the most important piece of gear. Is your body truly in shape for winter recreation?

As they used to say on the streets, "Betta' check yourself, before you wreck yourself."

The absolute best time to begin preparing for a new ski season is at the close of your last ski season. That's due to a simple truth: It's much smarter – as well as much easier – to keep fit than it is to become fit.

This maxim is particularly apt for heart-lung fitness, your "V02 max," or aerobic capacity. Generally, this measure of athletic health falls by about 1 percent per year after age 25. The only thing that slows the decline to any significant degree is maintaining a regular aerobic regimen.

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