

# **PHYSICAL CONDITIONING**

Congratulations on your decision to join a NOLS alumni or outreach course. Many participants find their NOLS experience to be physically challenging. To help you have a successful experience, we've gathered some ideas on physical conditioning to help you prepare for your time with NOLS.

On NOLS expeditions we live for days or weeks in remote locations and work hard camping, preparing meals, sleeping outdoors, and caring for ourselves and each other in what can be extreme weather. Depending on your specific course, you'll also be carrying packs, paddling, hiking, climbing, horse packing, sailing, mountain biking or skiing. Conditioning is important for your safety and the safety of others. It will also add to your enjoyment and your ability to be a contributing member of the expedition.

## **START YOUR CONDITIONING PROGRAM NOW:**

If you are already in good shape, keep it up. If not, consult with your physician or an athletic trainer and get started as soon as possible. You don't need to be a superb athlete to enjoy the wilderness, but increasing your muscle strength, flexibility and aerobic fitness will enable you to focus on the curriculum and activities of the course.

## **SELECT AN ACTIVITY YOU ENJOY:**

Expensive equipment or health club memberships are not required to get in shape, although some people find that they are helpful fitness motivators. If you enjoy what you are doing, whether it's swimming, bicycling, jogging, hiking, Nordic skiing, aerobics, or weight training, you are more likely to continue with your program. You may find that varying your activities helps to keep you interested and motivated.

## **BUILD STRENGTH AND AEROBIC FITNESS:**

NOLS courses require both strength (lifting packs, paddling boats) and stamina (long days on the trail, on climbs, or in boats). In addition to doing strength training such as sit ups, push ups, pull ups and weight lifting, be sure that you are doing endurance activities to help you through the long days. Jogging, hiking, swimming, Nordic skiing, stair climbing, rowing machine, cycling, walking at a brisk pace or aerobics—anything that gets your heart beating—will help build your aerobic fitness level.

## **EXERCISE AT LEAST THREE TIMES A WEEK:**

If you're beginning a fitness routine, start slowly. Aim for 3 sessions a week at 30 to 45 minutes each. Increase length and frequency when you feel ready.

A typical NOLS day involves all types of movement using all the muscle groups. Warming up and stretching before an activity will increase flexibility and reduce chances for injury.

## **GET INSPIRED:**

We want to encourage, not intimidate you. NOLS courses are strenuous, but they are within the limits of a person of average physical fitness. Being in shape will not guarantee you an easy time on your course but it will allow you to focus on learning skills, gaining experience, and enjoying the natural beauty of the wilderness and the companionship of your fellow expedition members.

# **SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT**

Safety is taught and practiced on every course; we are proud of NOLS' safety record. Despite operating to the best of our capabilities, the possibility of an accident still exists. We cannot—nor can anyone— reduce that possibility to zero.

NOLS alumni and outreach courses are not easy and can be dangerous. Safety is a fundamental part of the NOLS curriculum good physical conditioning and a positive mental attitude are essential.

Before you arrive, thoroughly read all course materials, and call us if you have questions. The Acknowledgment of Risk Form, which must be signed before you attend your course, explains many of the risks and hazards that may apply to your course. A report on NOLS safety management and safety history is available upon request.

The remoteness of the areas where we travel can create complex emergency situations that have no simple solutions. On the more remote outreach courses we may be eight hours or more from medical help. Emergency procedures and plans are an integral part to any NOLS expedition.

The majority of common wilderness medical incidents—sprains, flu, diarrhea, etc.—may be treated in the field. A more serious incident, such as a fracture, will require evacuation of the patient to a medical facility.