

SPRING TUNE-UPS

BY CAROL GODWIN

It feels like spring -- oops, it feels like winter -- now it's warm again but with snow expected... Here in the White Mountains, the weather changes weekly, daily and even hourly. "Cabin Fever" is the feeling of restlessness we get when we are forced to be inside and inactive for too long. We feel cranky, impatient, irritable and lazy. We take these feelings out on our loved ones, fellow customers in stores and on complete strangers. To combat cabin fever, we need to get moving -- physically and mentally. We all get restless for spring to show up and inevitably, the conversation turns to weather and -- When can we go out and ride again?.

There are several things we can do to prepare for this most anticipated seasonal change. First, during the winter, we can stay in shape by exercising in alternate ways. An indoor trainer is an essential go-to for many of us here in the White Mountains and will help keep you in top cycling shape. Cardio exercise of any type, including skiing, snowshoeing, hiking and regular neighborhood walks are great ways to keep us healthy and strong, both physically and mentally. Periodic trips to warmer and drier parts of the state give us the renewal we need to push through until we reach true spring. Spring often arrives sporadically and unpredictably in the White Mountains and, to be prepared to take full advantage of it, we need to be sure our bikes, as well as our bodies and minds are in top shape to respond immediately to any opportunity.

An annual spring tune-up for your bike is essential to keeping it in great working shape for years to come. During a tune-up, you will need to check over your bike to make sure it is serviceable and safe to ride. You will have to lubricate all the moving parts, check brakes, adjust the shifting and take care of whatever problems you may have noticed about your bike's performance. Chains wear out at different rates depending on your riding style and the terrain you are covering during your rides. Chains don't stretch but they wear so that the spacing between the links is effectively looser, wearing out the teeth of your cassette unevenly. Replacing a worn chain prevents having to potentially replace an expensive cassette. Replacing worn brake pads prevents having to potentially replace a costly worn rotor and checking the action of your derailleur prevents excessive wear on both the chain and cassette. If you are using a tubeless set-up in your tires, the sealant needs to be checked and potentially replaced to prevent unnecessary flats on the road or trail.

Spring is just around the corner. Now is a great time to take your bike to your local bike shop for its tune-up to beat the spring rush. Get ready to be outdoors now and, when you get to that first set of great days, you'll be out enjoying your freedom while others are just getting started playing catch-up!

