



## Winter Wellness Tips



### **Stop Illness Before it Knocks You Out**

If you haven't already, please consider getting the flu vaccine. This will help protect both you and your family from getting the influenza virus. Symptoms of influenza can be cough, congestion, fever and fatigue which can last up to two weeks. Studies have shown that the flu vaccine can reduce the risk of getting the flu by 40-60%.

If you do start feeling a sore or scratchy throat, or a bit of nasal congestion and it's still in the early stages you can take action. Keep some natural remedies at home to take at the first sign of a cold or influenza. Olive leaf, garlic, echinacea, elderberry, vitamin C, and zinc may help boost your immunity and increase our resistance to nasty winter viruses.

### **Wash Hand Thoroughly and Often**

Winter is the peak season for contagious illnesses! The most effective way to remove and prevent the spread of illness-causing germs is to wash your hands frequently. When washing your hands, get a good lather of soap on your hands and scrub for at least 20 seconds with warm water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to help slow the spread of viruses.

### **Get Outside and Enjoy the Sun!**

Staying inside all winter breathing nothing but indoor air can increase your chances of getting sick over the winter and can contribute to the winter time depression. While the availability of sunlight is limited during the winter months it is important to spend some time outdoors. Sunlight has been shown to help improve your mood by boosting the release of a hormone called serotonin. Exposure to sunlight is especially important to help treat those suffering from seasonal affective disorder (SAD), a form of depression. In addition, exposure to sunlight also helps regulate your circadian rhythm, which controls your body clock and affects sleep habits.

Choose a day when the sky is blue and clear - dress warmly and step out and feel the winter sunshine. You'll feel much better!

### **Make the Most of Nutritious Winter Fruits and Vegetables**

Eating during winter doesn't have to be boring and vitamin deficient. Limit high carbohydrate foods such as white bread and pasta, fill your plate with dark leafy greens, winter squash, citrus and pomegranate, which all thrive in the winter months.

The winter fruits and vegetables are rich with nutrients, antioxidants and fiber which can increase your energy and help keep you from gaining winter weight.

### **Protect Your Skin From the Inside-Out and Outside-In**

Cold, dry winter air and hot air from central heating units both contribute to dry, itchy skin.

Keep your skin moisturized by applying a heavy, oil-based moisturizer every time after you bath or shower, or whenever your skin feels dry. Drink plenty of water and eat foods like berries which are high in antioxidants and omega-3 fatty which can be found in salmon and walnuts. Also consider using a humidifier in your home to keep moisture in the air.

### **Try Keeping a Regular Sleep Schedule**

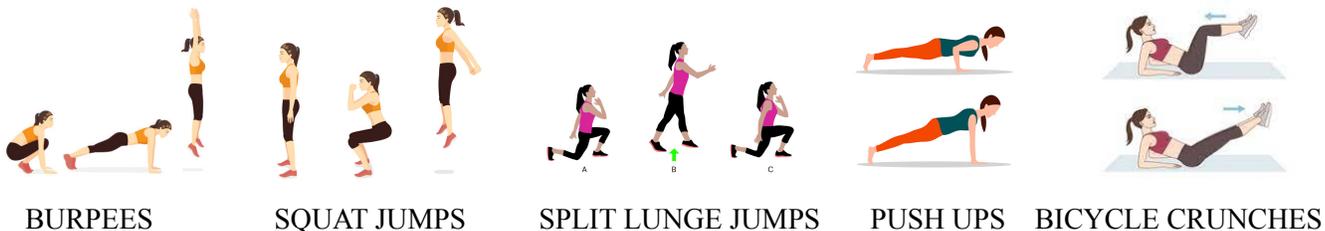
Our sleep-wake cycle is regulated by the hormone melatonin, which is released in response to light. Exposing yourself to too much light at night, such as light that is emitted from computer screens, TV screens or electronic devices, slows down the release of melatonin which decreases our quality and quantity of sleep.

Try to get up and go to bed at the same time of the day regardless of the season and limit TV, computer and electronic device use at night before bed. Also, consider taking a melatonin supplement if you are having trouble sleeping.

## Get Moving!

Winter months can be a challenging time to stick to an exercise routine, however, winter time is the most important time to stay active. You don't need to join a health club or own any fancy workout equipment. You can do some simple exercises in your own home:

Burpees, squat jumps, split lunges, push ups, planks, bicycle crunches



You can also access many free fitness and yoga videos online. Yoga with Adriene offers several free yoga videos you can do at home: <https://yogawithadriene.com/free-yoga-videos/>

## Watch Your Vitamin D Level

Our immune system and our mood rely on vitamin D! Maintaining your vitamin D level can help you stay healthy and keep you from feeling down during the winter months.. Vitamin D is made in our bodies after exposure to the sun, with less exposure to direct sunlight it's not uncommon for people to become deficient in vitamin D during the winter. Vitamin D also helps our bodies absorb and retain calcium and phosphorus for building strong, healthy bones.

Ask your doctor for a blood test to determine your vitamin D level and if yours are low, you may benefit from a daily vitamin D supplement. Please consult your doctor for the correct dosage.

## Stay in Control of Asthma

Winter can be a challenging time for people with asthma. Cold and influenza viruses can trigger asthma attacks; dry air or smoke from fireplaces can irritate airways; and real Christmas trees may harbor invisible mold spores that exacerbate asthma symptoms.

Try to avoid known asthma triggers, if you can. Consider an artificial Christmas tree and cover your mouth with a scarf when going outside. Keep taking your daily asthma medication, even if you are feeling well and see your doctor if you feel your asthma is not under good control during the winter months.

## Be Mindful of Your Heart

Extreme cold coupled with unaccustomed exertion is not good for your heart. Studies have shown that the rate of heart attacks increases as the temperature outside decreases. People who don't normally participate in a lot of physical activity and then subject themselves to intense bursts of activity, such as shoveling heavy snow, are even more at risk.

Be careful if you have to go outside on a freezing cold day to shovel snow. Use a small shovel and move only small amounts of snow at a time. Take any chest pain seriously! Seek immediate medical attention if you feel discomfort, chest tightening, or pain in the chest, upper arm, neck or jaw area. Most heart attacks begin with mild symptoms initially so it's important to get any symptoms of chest pain checked out by a physician.

*Have a Happy, Safe and Healthy Winter*