

Healthy Living Newsletter

A MedWatch publication to keep you healthy and informed.



Staying Healthy in Winter



Living Healthy in Cold Weather

When temperatures drop and windows and doors stay shut, viruses can thrive indoors. If your immune system isn't up to the task, you're likely to catch the latest bug to hit town. That's why it's essential to ward off the very real threat of colds, flu, and other scary winter germs lurking on every doorknob and on every grab-rail. Here are 6 ways to cruise through winter without getting sick.

- 1. Get a flu shot.** According to the CDC, a flu shot can reduce your risk of getting the flu by up to 60% and can decrease the severity and side effects if you do get sick. So, roll up your sleeve and take advantage of this immunity game-changer.
- 2. Wash your hands often!** Disease-carrying microbes can spread from person to person or via contaminated surfaces. Simply put, hand washing is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of both viral and bacterial infections. Wash your hands vigorously throughout the day. Carry and use hand sanitizer when washing is not convenient.
- 3. Boost your vitamin C.** Research has shown vitamin C to be one of the most powerful immune boosting vitamins available. This water-soluble vitamin can be found in oranges, orange juice, broccoli and in other fruits and vegetables as well as in high quality multivitamins.
- 4. Get moving!** Exercise increases the flow of blood throughout your body and circulates the components of your immune system, enabling it to find illnesses before they spread. At least 30 minutes of moderate exercise three times per week will help boost your immune system, decrease stress, and keep your weight down.
- 5. Wear shoes with good traction.** With icy, slippery conditions, falling is unfortunately a common wintertime injury. When heading outside, make sure your shoes or boots have a sole with good traction and a low heel to help prevent slips and falls. Watch where you're walking and tread carefully to avoid icy patches.
- 6. Recharge your batteries.** The more rested your body, the better it can take advantage of the above measures against colds and flu. Six to eight hours of sleep per night should be your goal.

See more exercise options for winter below!



Overcoming the Winter Blues

Dark mornings, darker evenings, and chilly gray days in between mean winter is here — and with the coldest season comes the winter blues. As winter gets underway and the holiday high of family time and festivities fades, it's not unusual for people to begin feeling sad, tired, or moody.

How are you supposed to maintain your goal of healthy living when Old Man Winter makes outdoor activities so uninviting? Fortunately, there are many ways for us to keep from falling victim to the winter blues. Here are some suggestions:

- **See the Light.** Did you know that sunlight exposure releases neurotransmitters in the brain that affect mood and our ability to sleep? Overcome winter's reduced sunlight hours by spending 15-30 minutes outdoors each day. Keep your shades up during the day to let in more light. Sit near windows when possible.
- **Get Plenty of Sleep.** The average person needs 6-8 hours of sleep per night. If you're not getting enough sleep, your body is extremely vulnerable to illness. Sleep is very much like recharging your batteries!
- **Stay Healthy.** Staying indoors with little fresh air is a common way germs can transfer from person to person. Keep bugs at bay by washing your hands often, use hand sanitizer, and avoid exposure to sick people. Consider getting a flu shot to reduce your chances of catching the flu.
- **Get Outside.** Exposure to fresh air, sunshine and even the cold air has health benefits. Find ways to get outside and embrace the winter weather: walk your errands at lunchtime, park farther away from your destination, walk the dog, do yard work, ice skate, ski or go sledding.
- **Hang with Positive People.** The people around you influence you more than you think. Psychologists have found that depression can affect other people and can even be contagious. If you surround yourself with people who love winter, you might be inclined to feel the same.

Nutrition Corner

8 MOOD-BOOSTING FOODS TO BRIGHTEN YOUR WINTER MOOD

If you are like most people, the shorter daylight hours and dreary winter weather can sometimes get you down. Less sunlight and fewer opportunities for outdoor exercise can combine to make you feel sluggish. **But did you know you can improve the way you feel by eating certain natural foods?**

By eating foods that are high in vitamins B, C and D and rich in magnesium, iron, folate, and omega-3 fatty acids, you can increase both your energy levels, and, in many cases, improve your mood. Beat the winter blues with some of the foods below!

- 1. Fish.** Eating oily, fatty fish like salmon, tuna, sardines, rainbow trout, or mussels will give you omega-3s, a key mood-boosting nutrient and one that our bodies don't produce. Omega-3s alter brain chemicals linked with mood—specifically dopamine and serotonin.
- 2. Fresh fruits and vegetables.** The rich amounts of vitamin C in oranges, grapefruits, lemons, and limes can help fight fatigue and depression. Leafy green vegetables such as spinach, collard greens, kale, and chard are high in potassium, magnesium, and calcium, which help regulate stress hormones and your sleep cycle.
- 3. Mushrooms.** Eating a serving of mushrooms is the equivalent to taking a daily vitamin D supplement. Mushrooms also contain two B vitamins, niacin, and riboflavin, which can help improve your mood.
- 4. Nuts.** Many of us are low in our consumption of magnesium, and, as a result, can feel fatigued and experience other mood-altering effects, such as muscle tension, an irregular heartbeat, insomnia, and restless leg syndrome. Try snacking on nuts or adding them to your salads to get enough of this important nutrient.
- 5. Dark chocolate.** Here's a mood-boosting food that is fun to eat! Dark chocolate produces endorphins in the brain that help us feel good, and particularly affects the stress hormone cortisol, slowing its production and helping to defeat the feeling of stress it creates.
- 6. Garlic.** If you love Italian food, chances are you love garlic. Did you know garlic is good for your mood? Garlic also relaxes the body's blood vessels and can lower blood pressure.
- 7. Bananas.** When you eat a banana, you get a healthy combination of potassium, vitamins A, C, and B6, fiber, potassium, iron, protein and carbohydrates. Plus, you get a quick energy boost from both the fructose and the fiber.
- 8. Eggs.** Eggs are loaded with mood-promoting omega-3 fatty acids, zinc, B vitamins, and iodine, and because they're packed with protein, they'll also keep you full and energized long after you eat them.

Your Total Lifestyle Coach (TLC) is your personal 'health advocate'.

For more information, additional tools, and resources to help you improve and maintain your health, call (800) 386-5475.

Winterize Your Workout!

Don't let the winter season be an excuse to stray from those resolutions and lose your workout mojo. Winter is a great time to diversify your workout by finding activities to keep you moving. We've rounded up our favorite calorie-busting workouts that can be done indoors to keep you active through the winter.

- Powerwalking at the mall
- Taking a fitness or spin class
- Salsa or other dancing
- Weight training
- Swimming
- Yoga or Pilates
- Martial arts
- Shooting hoops

Don't forget to enjoy the outdoors during the winter months too! Here are some great calorie-burning activities:

Skiing (cross-country and downhill)	Hiking
Snowboarding	Sledding
Ice skating	Jogging or walking

January is Blood Donation Awareness Month

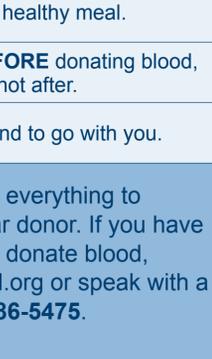
This month marks the 52nd anniversary of National Blood Donor Month, a time to recognize the importance of giving blood and platelets while celebrating the life-saving impact of those who donate blood.

5 Reasons to Give Blood

The American Red Cross is facing its worst blood shortage in over a decade, posing a risk to patient care. The cause, in part, is a 10% decline in the number of people donating blood since the beginning of the pandemic due to blood drive cancellations and staffing limitations. Blood and platelet donations are critically needed to help prevent further delays in vital medical treatments.

Your donations help give life to the millions of Americans each year who require blood transfusions during surgery, after an accident, or because they have a disease that requires blood components. However, if you have never donated blood, it's completely natural to feel a bit anxious about the experience. You can overcome your concerns by focusing on these top reasons you should give blood:

- 1. You're helping up to 3 other people.**
- 2. You get a free health check-up.**
- 3. It may improve your heart health.**
- 4. It doesn't really hurt.**
- 5. You might need a blood donation one day.**



Blood Donation Tips

Before you become a blood donor, follow these tips to help make your donation easy and healthy.

Drink plenty of water.	Eat a healthy meal.
Wear a shirt with sleeves you can roll up.	Exercise BEFORE donating blood, not after.
Take iron supplements.	Ask a friend to go with you.

Blood donation costs you nothing but it can mean everything to someone in need. Please consider being a regular donor. If you have any questions or concerns about your eligibility to donate blood, contact the American Red Cross at redcrossblood.org or speak with a MedWatch Total Lifestyle Coach (TLC) at **(800) 386-5475**.

Thank you for subscribing to MedWatch's Healthy Living newsletter! We hope you enjoyed the content and found it to be a valuable resource.