



10 Tips for Staying Healthy in Winter

Hello Everyone,

The Winter season offers us with the greatest challenges for Staying Healthy. The cold and damp extreme weathers are often the hardest on our body, along with the shorter daylight and less sunshine to give us energy and vitality. So, Staying Healthy in Winter is an Inside Job, with nourishing and warming foods, lots of stretching and indoor exercises, more sleep and emotional enrichment with the love of family and friends, visiting and sharing by the fireside.

Here are my 10 Tips for you to consider:

1. **Take Time for Reflection.** The introspective nature of winter provides an excellent opportunity for greater reflection and self-assessment. Take an honest look at where you are. At the same time, be gentle with yourself. If you are somewhat depleted, you may also feel more vulnerable and more susceptible to illness. Your emotions may be high, or you may be more sensitive than usual. See if you are able to accept yourself more fully in as many areas of your life as possible.

2. **Reduce Stress.** That will help you conserve your inner resources and slow down unnecessary drains on your energy. Assess the type of stress you are experiencing – is it physical or emotional? Are you feeling stress from your environment, an illness, your work, or relationships? Write down a few tips to help with your stress.

3. **Get Quality Sleep.** Sleep involves both your state-of-mind and body chemistry. If you go to bed feeling stressed or laden with worries, even if you don't normally have

insomnia, your sleep may not have the quality it does when your mind is relaxed. On the other hand, I have patients who report that they sleep more deeply and more easily if they supplement with certain nutrients, such as calcium and magnesium.

4. Increase the Relaxation in your Life. Learn some relaxation exercises or practice yoga, Tai chi, Qigong, or Pilates exercises. These gentle practices can be done almost anywhere, regardless of the weather. Hitting the gym for some cardio and weights along with a steam or sauna will do you good as well.

5. Nourish Yourself. In this still cold time of winter, provide your body with the extra raw materials it needs. Emphasize warming foods – more concentrated sources of fuel and nutrients, including whole grains and beans, nuts and seeds, seaweed, and quality proteins. In cold or damp weather, you also require a few more calories and spices such as ginger, garlic, and cayenne to heat your body.

6. Essential Nutrients - be sure you're getting enough of what your body needs. I also recommend some nutrient enhancement to protect you from the stresses of cold, snow, wind, dampness, and the decrease in sunlight. This is the reason cod liver oil was a staple in healthy families in the 19th century – it contains vitamins A, D, and good fatty acids. The antioxidants are important, especially vitamins A, E, and C. Nutrients that address stress include the B complex vitamins (with B5 and B12), as well as the range of "smart supplements" now available such as alpha lipoic acid, phosphatidyl serine, and others.

Make sure you get enough friendly fats and oils – the essential fatty acids you need to operate the nervous system, rebuild and protect your cells, and assure good brain function. Good foods include avocado, sardines and salmon, plus all the healthy nuts and seeds, such as pumpkin, sesame, and sunflower, plus almonds and walnuts. Remember that these fats do not make us fat – in fact, you're more likely to gain weight if you don't have them, because the lack may increase your food cravings.

7. Avoid Over-indulgence. If you feel like you're "running on empty," it makes sense to give yourself a little extra nurturing. But don't confuse self-care with self-indulgence. Continue to minimize sweets and simple starches and avoid the empty calories of junk food. Portion sizes may also be a factor. Provide yourself with quality nutrition and supplements rather than constantly jump-starting yourself with caffeine.

8. Have Fun and Laugh. Hang out with your most fun-loving and light-hearted friends and loved ones, including animal friends. Simple pleasures are stress reducing and healing. Watching movies or funny TV shows is a good stress reducer as well.

9. **Make Time for Love.** Touch and intimacy are also good for your health. If you're not in an intimate relationship, get a massage, renew an old friendship, or make time for some close emotional interchanges with a trusted friend or family member.

10. **Nourish Others.** Notice also how that nourishes you deeply in return. Build giving into your life. Another important aspect of giving is remembering to keep reasonable limits or boundaries, so you don't feel swallowed up or depleted by your generosity. That brings us full circle to the idea of conserving energy during winter, in preparation for the rebirth of spring.

Stay Healthy!

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