

Your Health





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Fight Winter Blues with Food

Gray days and long winter nights can trigger a specific type of depression called seasonal affective disorder.

While you should always talk to your doctor if you're feeling depressed and especially if you've had suicidal thoughts, and always take any medicines prescribed for you, what's on your plate can make a difference in how you feel.

Here's some good eats from Healthline.

LEAN PROTEINS

Meats like fish, chicken, leaner cuts of pork and other proteins carry lots of amino acids, which Healthline says may positively affect your mood. These lean proteins can also be a

great source of energy to fight that winter fatigue.

OMEGA-3S

Healthline cites a University of Pittsburgh study that finds higher levels of omega-3 fatty acids can make you less likely to experience moderate or mild symptoms of depression. Sources of omega-3 fatty acids include salmon, walnuts and flax seeds.

BERRIES

Blueberries, raspberries and strawberries may help prevent the release of stress hormone cortisol, Healthline

says. Cortisol can affect memories, emotional responses and navigation.

LIMIT YOUR SUGAR

We know. It's comforting and feels good. But UCLA research says too much sugar can slow down brain function. The crash after a sugar high can make you feel worse than you did before.

FOLIC ACID

There's some evidence the brain uses folic acid to create serotonin, a neurotransmitter that affects the mood. Get folic acid in foods like leafy greens, oatmeal, sunflower seeds, oranges and fortified cereals.

VITAMIN B-12

Another vitamin that may have a

positive effect on your mood is B-12. According to the Mayo Clinic, B-12 helps produce brain chemicals that affect mood. Find it in foods such as lean beef, oysters, crab and dairy.

DARK CHOCOLATE

We just said avoid sugar, right? Well, look for a bar with high cocoa content and lower sugar. Dark chocolate, specifically the polyphenols in it, have been linked to an improved mood. Polyphenols are a type of antioxidant.

BANANAS

Bananas contain tryptophan to improve your mood, along with carbohydrates and potassium to run your brain. They also have a dose of magnesium, which may improve sleep and reduce anxiety.

Staying Safe Outside

Winter's cold temperatures bring an extra layer of challenge to being outside. Hypothermia is a deadly condition caused by prolonged exposure to cold temperatures and can occur at temperatures as warm as 40 degrees in the right conditions.

Keep yourself safe with these tips from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

BE WEATHER AWARE

Before going out, check the weather conditions and, most importantly, the wind chill. The wind chill — the combination of the temperature, wind and moisture — is how cold it's going to feel to you outside. Also be aware of rain or any winter weather that can cause treacherous conditions. Since being wet can amplify the effects of cold, if you're going out in the rain, wear waterproof gear and boots.

DRESS WARMLY

Put on layers. As you warm up with moving around, remove the layers to keep yourself cool. You can add them back if you get chilled. Also wear a hat, scarf and gloves to protect tender extremities.

WATCH YOUR HEART

Cold weather puts more strain on the heart. If you have a heart condition, move a little more

slowly than you would in warmer temperatures. And never exert yourself on chores like shoveling snow without clearance from a doctor.

SIGNS OF HYPOTHERMIA

Hypothermia is an abnormally low body temperature. Warning signs, the CDC says, are shivering and exhaustion, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech and bright red skin. If a person's body temperature falls below 95 degrees, it's a medical emergency. If you can't seek medical care immediately;

- Get the person into a warm room or shelter.
- Remove any wet clothing.
- Warm the center of the body first with an electric blanket or skin-to-skin contact under loose, dry layers of blankets or clothes.
- Give warm, non-alcoholic beverages if they are conscious.
- Keep the person wrapped in a blanket even if their temperature rises.
- Seek medical attention as soon as possible.



Keep Moving in the Winter

When the weather outside is frightful, it can be hard to keep your exercise routine. Here are some tips for keeping active amidst the trays of holiday cookies and that Thanksgiving gravy.

HIT THE MALL

You might need to pick up a few gifts, anyway, so why not take a few laps in the climate controlled shopping mall? Many malls have markers inside to tell you how far you've gone. Just remember to stay safe when walking. Wear appropriate shoes and practice good safety in the parking lot.

SHOVEL SNOW, RAKE LEAVES, OR DO OTHER YARD WORK

Make sure you get the all-clear from your doctor first, especially for strenuous activity like shoveling snow. And get the right equipment. Visit your local home improvement store for advice on what you need.

HEAD FOR THE HILLS

Take up a new sport like skiing or snowboarding. Grab the family and sign up for lessons at a local ski area for a great winter bonding experi-



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ence. The experts at your local sporting goods or outdoor stores can point you to the right equipment for any skill level.

TAKE DANCE LESSONS

Get ready for those holiday parties by cutting a rug at your local gym or dance studio.

RESTORATIVE EXERCISE

Start practicing (indoor!) restorative exercises like tai chi and yoga to stay active and also fight off holiday stress.

GRAB YOUR SKATES

Many arenas open up an ice rink for the holiday season. Rent some skates and hit the ice for a couple of hours.

Spotlight on Diabetes

More than 100 million adults have diabetes or prediabetes, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says. Diabetes is a disease in which your blood glucose levels, or blood sugar, is too high. Over time, too much glucose in your blood can damage your eyes, kidneys and nerves, and diabetes can also cause heart disease.

Type 1 diabetes occurs when your body doesn't make insulin at all. Type 2 diabetes, which is much more common, occurs when your body doesn't make or use insulin well.

SYMPTOMS

Early symptoms of Type 2 diabetes include bladder, kidney, skin or other infections that are more frequent and heal more slowly; fatigue; hunger; increased thirst and urination; and blurred vision.

DIAGNOSIS

If your blood sugar is more than 200 milligrams per deciliter, your doctor will recommend a follow-up test to confirm a diabetes diagnosis. It may be a fasting glucose test done twice, a A1C test or an oral glucose tolerance test. A diabetes screening is recommended for overweight children with other risk factors starting at 10 years old, overweight adults with risk factors, and adults starting at 45 every three years.

MANAGING DIABETES

Once diagnosed, you may be prescribed medication to help treat your diabetes. You'll also need to check your blood sugar levels frequently to make sure your treatment is working (your blood sugar



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should be 80-130 before a meal and less than 180 about two hours after a meal starts). Take your medicines and follow your doctor's instruc-

tions, and also change your diet and get plenty of exercise.

Skip high sugar, high fat and high carbohydrate dishes

and instead load up your plate with fruits and veggies, beans, eggs, whole grains, lean meats, and low-fat dairy products. Pick water over

sugary drinks and use less salt. Also, get heart-healthy fats like those in oils that are liquid at room temperature and avocado.



Beating Dry, Itchy Skin

Blasts from heaters may keep us warm and toasty, but they can also parch our skin and leave it itchy and dry. Follow these guidelines for keeping your skin soft and smooth all year long.

GRAB A CREAM, NOT A LOTION

Thicker creams protect better than thinner lotions says Cleveland Clinic dermatologist Dr. Christine Poblete-Lopez. Also, protect your face from windburn and frostbite with thick ointments.

Use the creams two or three times a day, and make at least one of those applications right after you get out of the bath or shower to lock in moisture. Visit your local health and beauty store for tips on what products to use.

AVOID HOT WATER

Speaking of showers, avoid hanging out in a hot shower or immersing yourself in a scalding bath. It feels great on sore muscles, sure, but it can also dry out your skin. Limit yourself to five to 10 minutes and one bath or shower per day.

You also might consider swapping your regular soap for a more gentle cleanser. Avoid soaps and detergents with a fragrance, as those scents can

also cause itching.

STAY HYDRATED

Make sure you get your eight glasses and then some, if you need it. Also, it's gross, but pay attention to the color of your pee. If you're hydrated, your pee should be clear or light yellow. Pay attention as well to your thirst. When you're thirsty, drink. If you stay hydrated, so does your skin.

WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR

You need to see a doctor if you have persistent dry, itchy skin; you feel itchy without a visible rash; dryness and itching keep you from sleeping; or you have open cuts or scratches from itching.

Fighting the Common Cold

Most adults have as many as three colds a year and children have them a lot more, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says. Cold are caused by a virus, the most common being rhinovirus. Other cold-causing critters include respiratory syncytial virus, human parainfluenza virus, adenovirus, human coronavirus and human metapneumovirus.

SYMPTOMS

Though colds can occur any time of year, most people get them in the winter and spring. Symptoms include:

- Sore throat;
- Runny nose;
- Coughing;
- Sneezing;
- Headaches; and
- Body aches.

These should resolve in seven to 10 days, but a cold can develop into a more serious illness like bronchitis or pneumonia.

PREVENTION

Wash your hands often with warm water and soap for 20 seconds. Teach your children to do this, also. If there's no soap, use a hand sanitizer. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands and stay away from people who are sick. If you're sick, stay home and don't spread your germs to others.

TREATMENT

There's no cure, but over-the-counter medicines can treat your symptoms. For children, talk to a doctor before administering cold medications.

Rest and get plenty of fluids, and run a clean humidifier or cool-mist humidifier. Take acetaminophen, ibupro-



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fen or naproxen to relieve pain and fever.

For a sore throat: Soothe it with ice chips, popsicles, lozenges or a spray; gargle with salt water and drink warm

beverages.

For ear pain: Put a warm, moist compress on the affected ear.

For a runny nose: Increase your fluid intake and use a

decongestant or saline nasal spray.

For sinus pain and congestion: Put a warm compress over the nose and forehead; use a decongestant or saline

nasal spray; breathe in steam from hot water or a shower.

For cough: Breathe in steam from a hot water or shower; use lozenges or honey.

Spotlight on Arthritis

Creak or crack getting up in the morning? Trouble moving around? Swelling in the joints? You might have arthritis. There are several different kinds of arthritis, some forms of which may cause problems in other organs, but the most common type is osteoarthritis, which is related to aging or an injury. Read on to learn more.

CAUSES OF OSTEOARTHRITIS

Cartilage is a slippery tissue in your joints that absorbs the shock of movement and keeps your bones from rubbing together. When you have osteoarthritis, this cartilage breaks down and the bones rubbing together can damage the joint. Risk factors for osteoarthritis include being overweight, getting older and injuring a joint.

TREATMENTS

There are many treatments for osteoarthritis, including exercise, medicines and even surgery such as hip or knee replacements. But there are things you can do to mitigate the damage and the pain from this condition.

Even though it hurts at first, it pays to keep moving. The Mayo Clinic recommends low-impact exercises (avoid things like running, jumping and high-impact aerobics). Instead, start with gentle stretches and move up to range-of-motion exercises and strength training. Consult with a local physical therapist or gym to learn a variety of beneficial exercises. Exercise can also help you lose weight, which will take pressure off your battered joints.

You can also use hot and cold to relieve pain and relax



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muscles and joints. Apply heating pads to the painful joint or take a hot bath to temporarily relieve pain.

Don't use a heating pad for more than 20 minutes at a time. Take cold packs to sore muscles to relieve pain after

exercise.

Also quit smoking and to keep a positive attitude, which can be difficult when

you're in pain. Don't be afraid to ask your doctor for a recommendation to a therapist if you need it.