



WINTER CHEAT SHEET: 5 WAYS TO STAY HEALTHY AS THE COLD ROLLS IN

Sick and tired of feeling ... well ... sick and tired? Give your immune system a fighting chance this winter with these easily actionable tips.

#1 MOVE YOUR BODY

It's tempting to become one with your couch as the temperature drops, but you're not doing your body any favours by parking in front of Netflix until November. In fact, a study in the British Journal of Sports Medicine found that staying active nearly halved participants' odds of catching a cold, and the infection was less severe when they did.

Continuing (or starting!) to exercise in winter will also keep you warm, lift your mood and, if you're doing it outdoors, provide much-needed vitamin D, which is bioavailable from only a limited number of foods.

Motivate yourself to move:

- Squeeze in a workout during your lunch hour. It'll be easier than trying to fit it in early in the morning or after work, when it's dark.
- Swim laps in a heated pool for some spa-like cardio. (You can read all about the healing power of water-based

exercise here.)

- Get the kids involved, too!
- Promise yourself you'll just get to the gym / turn on that Pilates video / get into your running clothes. Tell yourself that once you've taken the first step, you can stay or bail. Chances are, you'll stick it out since you're already there.
- Instead of aiming to lose weight or hit a PB, tap into how exercising makes you feel. Remembering that mood boost is more likely to get you moving than the idea of some mythical future six-pack.

#2 STAY HYDRATED

It's easy to guzzle water when the mercury is high, but it's equally important to stay hydrated during winter. 'In cold-weather conditions, additional water losses occur as a result of increased urine and respiratory water losses,' says the European Hydration Institute.

Drink up:

- Nobody said you have to down glasses of cold H₂O. Hot herbal teas count, too!
- Visualise it. Fill a bottle with your daily goal volume and make sure you finish it well before bedtime. Eat your water! Sneak in more hydration by consuming broths, water-based veggie soups and fluid-filled foods



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(like cucumber, tomatoes, baby marrows and oats).

#3 WASH YOUR HANDS!

A good hand-washing habit is your first line of defense against everything from a cold to Covid-19. Have you been getting a little slack in your pandemic hygiene routine lately? 5 May is [World Hand Hygiene Day](#) – a perfect reminder to keep washing those paws this winter!

It's best to wash your hands or sanitise...

- before and after visiting a public space
- before eating and cooking
- before touching your face
- after using the bathroom
- after touching animals, including family pets
- before and after visiting friends or relatives
- after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.

#4 NOURISH YOURSELF

We all want to turn to heaping portions of mac 'n' cheese or piles of buttery toast in winter, but your body will be better at fighting infections if it's properly nourished. Make sure you include a variety of veggies, fruit, protein and healthy carbs and fats in all your meals.

Go on the defensive with these immune-system assisting foods:

- Citrus fruit
- Red bell peppers (packed with vitamin C but without the sugar found in fruit)
- Oily fish
- Broccoli
- Spinach
- Turmeric
- Ginger
- Garlic
- Sweet potato
- Live yoghurt

#5 LOOK AFTER YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Feeling the winter blues? It could be [Seasonal Affective Disorder \(SAD\)](#), a kind of depressive episode triggered by the lack of light (and therefore an interruption in your circadian rhythm and serotonin production) during the winter months.

Even if you're not suffering from SAD, the short, cold days get all of us down at some point, so it's important to check in with your mental health during winter.

Feel better:

- Spend some time outside in the daylight, even if it's cloudy. You could also ask your healthcare practitioner about [light therapy](#).
- Get some exercise (scroll on up for our tips on working out in winter).
- Eat regular, balanced meals to help regulate your energy, and read our guide to five foods that impact your mental health.
- Don't isolate yourself. Try to keep participating in social activities and hobbies, even when the last thing you fancy doing is leaving your cosy home.
- Focus on getting good-quality sleep. Banish screens from the bedroom and try to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day.
- If you suspect your low mood is something a little more serious, chat to your GP about therapy options.

The information is shared on condition that readers will make their own determination, including seeking advice from a professional. E&OE.



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