



TOWN OF MENDON

BOARD OF HEALTH

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TIPS FOR STAYING HEALTHY DURING THE COLD WINTER MONTHS



Now that the days are shorter and the weather is colder, it's important to maintain healthy habits that will keep you feeling your best all winter long. And that means doing more than just bundling up. Here are six ways to stay healthy during cold weather:

1. **GET A FLU SHOT.** Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it's more important than ever to help prevent the spread of flu. No one wants to come down with the flu — it can cause symptoms such as coughing, congestion, fever, and fatigue that can last up to two weeks. Protect yourself and your family from getting sick by getting the flu vaccine. Recent studies show that flu vaccination reduces the risk of flu between 40 to 60 percent.
2. **WASH YOUR HANDS OFTEN.** Winter is peak season for contagious illnesses; in addition to COVID-19, we still need to take precautions to protect against cold and flu. The most effective way to remove and prevent the spread of illness-causing germs is to wash your hands frequently. When washing your hands, remember to 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.
3. **EAT FOR IMMUNITY.** As part of your efforts to stay well and avoid the cold and flu this winter, it's important to eat healthy foods that support your immune system, including mushrooms, garlic, citrus fruits, herbs and spices, probiotics, prebiotics, and chicken soup. For example, yogurt is one of the best sources of probiotics. Apples, bananas, garlic, and onions are good sources of prebiotics.
4. **KEEP MOVING!** The winter months can be a challenging time to stick to your exercise routine. Not only can preparing for the holidays leave you feeling drained, the cold weather can also be a deterrent to getting outside for some exercise. While it's important to stay active during the winter, it's also necessary to follow local guidelines on social distancing to stay safe. Consider working out at home with virtual exercise classes or exercise equipment, such as a treadmill or stair climber, and try to add extra movement into your routine throughout the day. When the weather is nice, take the opportunity to get some fresh air with a hike in one of the area's many trails.
5. **GET SOME SUN.** While the availability of sunlight is limited during the winter months, it's important to spend some time outdoors even when it's cold. 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. Exposure to sunlight also helps regulate your circadian rhythm, which controls your body clock and affects sleep habits.
6. **MAINTAIN GOOD SKIN HEALTH.** Cold weather can wreak havoc on your skin, leaving you with dryness, flaking, cracking, and in some cases, eczema. To keep your skin moist and healthy through the winter, be sure to drink plenty of water, hydrate your skin with an ointment moisturizer, and use sunscreen whenever you're out during the day. Exposure to the sun's rays, even in the winter, can still have damaging effects on your skin, so be sure to choose a sunscreen that has an SPF factor of 30 or above to ensure adequate protection.