

WINTER HEALTH GUIDE



15 TIPS FOR STAYING HEALTHY &

INJURY- FREE THIS WINTER



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There is nothing worse than sickness or injury slowing you down, and every season presents a variety of risks. Winter, a beautiful season filled with holidays and warm gatherings, poses a unique set of health hazards. From colds and flu to injuries from shoveling snow, winter can wreak havoc on your body—but it doesn't have to.

If faced with an illness or injury, it's important to know there is a Cooper Urgent Care center nearby to help get you back to full strength. It's also important to know that many of these health threats are preventable, and there are easy precautions you can take to stay healthy and injury-free this winter.

In this guide you'll find steps to help prevent the most common winter-related ailments. While everyone's bodies are different, and nothing health-related is a guarantee, following these steps will put you and your family on a path to enjoying a happy and healthy winter season!



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HEALTHY BODY

The biggest complaint most people have about winter is simple—it's cold! The cold weather we experience during the winter months presents many challenges to the human body. For example, the lack of moisture in the air causes skin to crack easily; early darkness prevents us from getting full doses of natural vitamin D. Hypothermia, if you're not dressed properly, can lead to death.

Understanding these dangers—and how to prevent them—is key to keeping your body healthy in cold weather. Follow these steps to fight off winter's effects on the body.



1. MOISTURIZE

Winter delivers cold, dry air that causes our skin to become dry and itchy. It's important to use a moisturizer on the parts of your body that are susceptible to flaking and cracking: hands, feet, face, and scalp.



It's also important to protect against sun damage in the winter. Most people think sunburn is a summer issue, but it can still be harmful during the winter months. Using a daily moisturizer that offers protection from UVA and UVB rays is recommended.

2. STRESS RELIEF

Many people are susceptible to seasonal depression during the winter months. The shorter days, cold weather, and holiday anxiety are all causes of stress, which can lead to many health problems.



To fend off the winter blues and relieve your stress levels, experts suggest several strategies: relaxation, exercise, connecting with friends, getting plenty of sleep, setting a routine, making plans, and getting some fresh air.

3. VITAMIN D

During winter, when the sun is very low in the sky, it's hard to get a sufficient amount of Vitamin D naturally. A Vitamin D deficiency can lead to many health conditions, including osteoporosis, heart disease, cancer, Alzheimer's, stroke, high blood pressure, and diabetes.



To help maintain your winter health, it's important either to take a supplement or eat foods that are rich in Vitamin D, such as salmon, tuna, mushrooms, eggs, and milk.

4. BUNDLE UP

It's important to dress for the elements. If you're not dressed properly for cold weather, the body works to keep the heart, brain, and lungs warm. This redirects heat from fingers and toes, causing them to feel cold and numb after a short period of time. If outdoors for longer periods, more dramatic results such as hypothermia can set in.



To fight off winter weather, bundle up to minimize the amount of skin exposed to the elements. Dress in layers—and don't forget your legs. Also wear a warm hat, thick gloves, and winter socks.

5. STAY HYDRATED

It's important to get plenty of daily fluids, even in winter when you may not feel as thirsty. Keeping your body well-hydrated helps fight off sickness, including flu and cold symptoms.



When it comes to proper hydration, many people are confused about how much water they should drink each day. A good rule of thumb is to drink between half an ounce and an ounce of water for each pound you weigh. You weigh 150 pounds? Then drink between 75 and 150 ounces of water daily — that's five to nine bottles of water.

FIGHT COLDS & FLU

We've all been there: feeling tired, stuffy, and sneezy, with a fever. Nothing is worse than being sick, and the winter season is particularly active with cold and flu cases running rampant.

Before you stock up on tissues, soup, and movies to help ride out impending sickness, there are several actions you can take to prevent catching whatever bugs go around this winter. The following steps will help you and your family fight off this winter's batch of colds and flu.



1. FLU SHOTS

Getting an annual flu shot is your best defense against contracting this prevalent winter virus. A flu shot will dramatically decrease your chances of contracting the virus. It also helps reduce the effects if you do get sick. And no, you cannot get the flu from getting the shot.



Plan on getting a flu shot in October or early November before the season peaks—but in case you forgot, better late than never. It's recommended that the entire family get the shot, beginning with infants six months and older on through seniors.

2. SLEEP

Sleep is truly a miracle drug. However, sleep is often seen as a luxury in today's busy world, and most people don't get enough. The body needs time to rest and recharge, and without enough sleep each night the effects can lead to increased chances of contracting a winter cold or the flu.



This winter season, make sleep a priority. Healthy adults require between seven and nine hours of sleep each night, while kids and teens require a couple of hours more.

3. HAND-WASHING

Sickness can easily be passed around from person to person. That's why you should be vigilant about washing your hands. This includes every time you sneeze or cough, use the restroom, and before meals.



It's also important to use proper hand-washing techniques. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with a period of vigorous rubbing using soap and warm water.

4. CLEAN & DISINFECT

Keeping your personal space—home, work area, vehicle—clean and disinfected is a great way to keep cold and flu germs at bay.



In order to properly kill those germs, it's important to use a virus-fighting disinfectant when you clean, especially in the kitchen and bathrooms. Also, keep often-touched items and surfaces clean: light switches, cell phones, computer keyboards, remote controls, doorknobs, countertops, faucet handles, and toys.

5. AVOID CLOSE CONTACT

Cold and flu viruses are spread from person to person. While it's impossible to avoid human contact completely, there are actions you can take to prevent contracting sickness.



Keep your distance if you know someone is sick, and give them time to recover before coming in close contact. The same goes for when you are sick: Refrain from close contact with others to avoid spreading your illness.

INJURY PREVENTION

It's a trend we see every year: When the weather gets cold, the news is filled with stories of severe falls, shoveling woes, house fires, and other dangers. These reports spike because winter's elements create safety concerns that need to be taken seriously.

Personal safety is a keystone to a happy and healthy lifestyle—that's why you'll want to take extra precautions in the winter months. The following steps will help protect you and your family from winter's dangerous conditions.



1. FOOTWEAR

Outdoor walking surfaces can provide major safety hazards during winter. Icy steps and sidewalks are common places where injuries occur—minor and major.

When walking on snow or ice, it's important to have quality footwear to provide traction. Insulated, water-resistant boots with good rubber treads are a must when navigating these dangerous surfaces.



2. SHOVEL SAFELY

From back injuries to heart attacks, the mix of cold temperatures and physical labor when shoveling snow present a variety of injury concerns.

To help prevent injuries, remember these few simple steps:

- 1.) Conduct warmup stretches to help prepare your body for continued physical activity;
- 2.) When lifting snow, keep your back straight and use your legs to lift the load;
- 3.) Use a light-weight shovel with an ergonomic handle to reduce bending and torquing your body;
- 4.) Clear snow soon after it's stopped falling—it will be lighter;
- 5.) During longer storms, try shoveling in shifts, clearing smaller amounts each time;
- 6.) Take frequent breaks.



3. SAFE DRIVING

Snowstorms and ice cause thousands of traffic incidents each year. The best option? Stay in when these conditions are present. If you must venture out, keep safety top of mind.

Be sure your vehicle is in good driving condition, your battery has a full charge, and your tires have good tread and are inflated to proper PSI levels. Also check fluid levels, and be sure your wipers provide clear visibility. When it's time to hit the road, follow the three keys to safe winter driving: stay alert, slow down, and stay in control.



4. FIRE PREVENTION

More house fires occur during the winter months than any other time of the year. These can lead to serious injury—and death. To prevent a house fire, it's best to take a proactive approach to ensure your home is safe for winter.

Have your furnace, chimney, and vents checked. Test your smoke alarms and change the batteries. Have fire extinguishers in accessible locations. Establish a fire escape plan, and conduct regular fire drills. Be careful at the stove and whenever you use candles, fireplaces, and space heaters.



5. CARBON MONOXIDE SAFETY

This odorless gas, known as "the silent killer," is responsible for illness and death in the winter months primarily due to faulty heating systems. Planning ahead is your best strategy to head off carbon monoxide disasters.

Fuel-burning appliances, chimneys, and vents should be in good working order. Never run gas-powered generators inside, and never leave a car warming up in an attached garage. Also, make sure you have a tested carbon-monoxide alarm on each level of your home. If the alarm sounds, leave the house immediately.





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