

Keeping Well in Winter

Colder weather and shorter daylight hours can impact on everyday health and wellbeing. There are lots of ways you can avoid the winter sniffles and blues by some simple self help measures.



Eating/drinking healthily - Breakfast is the most important meal of the day – a bowl of cereal such as porridge is an excellent way for starting up the body's metabolism in the morning. The fibre and starch help you to feel fuller and also release energy steadily through the day. A good fluid intake is essential for helping the body's equilibrium. Warm drinks can help heat the body when coming in from the cold.

Keep Warm - as the weather gets colder it is important to keep your body warm and this helps to combat colds as well as helping to reduce the risk of more serious conditions like pneumonia, depression, heart attacks and stroke.

A temperature in the home or the office of around 18 degrees centigrade is adequate. Avoid going out in extreme temperatures especially if you have an underlying medical condition. Wear warm clothes – wrap up warm with several layers of thin clothes. Items of clothing made from cotton, wool or natural fleece fiber all help to maintain body warmth.



Slips and falls – these can be avoided by wearing sensible shoes with a good grip especially in the ice or on wet leaves. Avoid overloading yourself when carrying shopping bags and ensure you can always see where you are walking and also have a free hand should you stumble.

Colds & Flu - a simple way to reduce the risk of having a cold is by washing your hands regularly as this destroys bugs that may have been picked up from touching surfaces used by other people e.g. light switches and handles.

Keep the house and any household items such as cups, glasses and towels clean, especially if someone in the house is unwell. Use disposable tissues as this helps prevent reinfection of your own hands. Carrying a small bottle of hand gel is also useful for applying when you are not easily able to wash your hands.

Ensure you have a supply of simple medication to help relieve symptoms of congestion, aches and pains, and sore throats.

Flu vaccine – if you have an underlying medical condition and have been advised to have the vaccine then it is important to listen to your health professional. The vaccine is also widely available for others who do not fit the NHS criteria from pharmacies (including supermarket pharmacies). Your own employer may also offer the flu vaccine.



Activity – exercise has many benefits both physical and emotional. It helps those who suffer from seasonal affective disorder, stress, depression and anxiety. It helps control weight, keeps the body warm and also to keep the body moving.

Look after your skin – being exposed to harsh wind and cold can lead to cracks and sores – wear gloves, apply moisturiser, drink adequate amount of fluids and avoid direct heat (e.g. car heater) as this dries the skin out. Apply moisturiser/hand cream at frequent intervals and especially at night.

Mental Health – the above tips all help with keeping mentally well – a healthy, sensible diet, adequate sleep and getting outside when the sun is out all help. If you experience Seasonal Affective Disorder, daylight bulbs or a daylight lamp can help.



Fatigue – During the winter months we cannot absorb vitamin D from the sun and so it is essential during the months of November to March to include food in your diet such as oily fish (e.g. salmon, mackerel and sardines), eggs and meat. Vitamin D is also added to all margarine, and to some breakfast cereals, soya products, dairy products and low-fat spreads so look out for this on the labels.

Aim to sleep for around eight hours a night and adopt a regular bedtime regime. Try to get to bed and get up at the same time every day. Ensure your bedroom is conducive to getting a good night's sleep – make it clear and tidy, and turn off the TV, computer and mobile phone!

Have a healthy winter!