



Preparing for Winter

By Wendy Marks
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The time has come for us to get ready for the winter chill. It's a season to enjoy, or so I try and tell myself, but aside from cozy sweaters I'm really not a fan. So here are some tips to stay comfortable and healthy. Winter brings its own incredible beauty so let's keep well to enjoy it.

Some foods to keep handy

Home-made and organic canned soups are good to stock up on now. Soups fill the body and soul. Make a big batch in your crock pot and freeze it up. If the power goes out, use your grill or hibachi to heat food outdoors (never use these cooking devices indoors). Don't forget to buy some frozen berries; they are good antioxidants and with oatmeal make a warm and hearty breakfast. Peanut butter, almond butter, or any nut butter can provide a great source of protein – both inexpensive and easy to eat on a rice cracker or an apple. Get some trail mix and health bars, like Lara or Cliff, to keep on hand for after shoveling or when outside playing in the snow. Canned tuna, salmon, or oysters provide all that good sea nutrition and can whip up fast and easy even if there is a power outage. Canned food for soups like beans or lentils on their own fill out your diet with protein and carbohydrates. Crackers, bread, or rice cakes can be the basis for a healthy snack.

Stock up on your pet food – you don't want to get stuck feeding Fluffy your expensive tuna! Carrots, squash, and apples keep a long time in the fridge and provide some fresh nutrition.

Going Outside in Winter

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends dressing infants and children in several thin layers, such as long johns, turtlenecks, one or two shirts, a sweater, warm socks, boots, gloves or mittens, and a coat. Layers are a good idea for you too. Dress children in one more layer than you. Remember, the first sign of hypothermia is shivering. Don't stay out past that point. You can always warm up and go back out when you are toasty and dry.

Dry Air and Hydration

Dry air keeps germs and dust floating around your house, and dries out the tissues in your nasal and sinus areas. It may increase the likelihood of sickness. We all should get a humidifier. Check sizes; whole house humidifiers rarely live up to their name. Saline rinses and nose drops or gel can also bring relief and protect this delicate tissue.

The humidity inside your home drops with the outdoor temperature. Relative humidity is cut in half for every ten degree Celsius difference between inside and outside temperature. This means that if the outside air is at 32 degrees and the inside air is at 68 degrees, an outdoor relative humidity of 60% will drop to an uncomfortably dry 15% indoors. Your indoor humidity level should be about 40% to be comfortable, though it may need to be a bit lower if that level causes condensation on your windows.

We are tropical creatures and need to adjust our environment. Bathing too often can dry skin, so bathe every other day or every third day, especially in the case of children. Save some water! Make sure to stay well hydrated. Cold weather brings increased consumption of hot cocoa and coffee, but we still need water. It's easier to dehydrate in winter due to the lack of humidity.

Staying Healthy

If you feel the beginnings of a cold or flu, it's important to support your immune system. Immune enhancers will help you keep your cells fighting and kicking out the bad bugs. Raw garlic (yes, you can get used to it) is terrific if you can do it. Try it in hummus or salsa to blunt the impact.

Take Vitamin C - lots of it. 4,000 mg is not too much. Start with 1,000 mg and add as the day goes on if you don't feel better. Echinacea, Elderberry syrup, and Isatis syrup all help fight the bugs that bug us. Probiotics can be helpful; I sometimes take four times the daily dose to knock out the bad bugs with good ones.

Sip lots of hot water with lemon and honey all day, as much as you can drink. Honey is antiseptic as well as nutritious and delicious. Sleep is truly the best remedy - don't try and fight it. Get cozy and nap away. If you become congested, take guaifenesin (Mucinex or the generic), but not with D for decongestant, just the one ingredient. It thins mucus with no other ill effects.

Simplify your diet to veggies, grains, soups or broths, tea and fresh water. Take

an immune enhancer every 1-2 hours. Keep warm – cover up your feet, neck, ears and lower back. Increase circulation and elimination with hot liquids while feeding your body healthful foods that are also highly medicinal: parsley, coriander, cumin, fennel, dill, thyme, oregano, sage, rosemary, basil, mint, ginger, cardamom, garlic, cayenne, cinnamon.

Smudge and Alcohol

Smudge energetically helps clear the room. Also try a mixture of lavender oil and isopropyl alcohol. Spray it around any area that sick folks have been in the house, bathrooms, door handles etc. I do it between clients to protect folks from the last visitor.

Stay healthy and enjoy the beauty of the season and the short days; it's a great time for playing in the snow, skiing, reading and catching up with friends.

Namaste, Wendy