

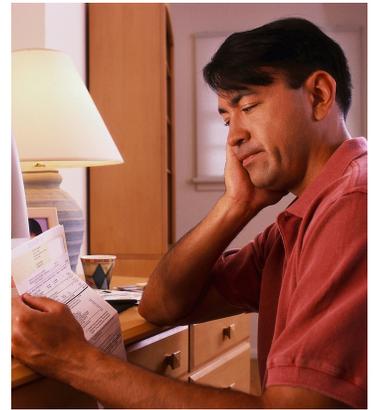
Beating the Winter Blues

Winter, with its cold weather, shorter days and inclement weather, can be the most difficult of seasons. Winter can bring on lethargy, feelings of depression, a weight gain, and a feeling of being pent up, often called “cabin fever.” However, there are actions that we can take to minimize the negative effects of winter, and truly embrace the season.

Increasing Your Light Intake

The shorter days can result a lessened exposure to light, which results in less vitamin D in our bodies, causing “down” moods. But we can counteract the effects by increasing our intake of light, by:

- Getting outside in the middle of the day
- Increasing our amount of time outdoors
- Finding ways to get more natural sunlight into the home and the workplace
- Adding more lights in the house
- Taking vitamin D supplements



Becoming More Active

Exercise is a great antidote for the winter doldrums. It relieves stress, builds energy, and increases mental and physical well-being. It also speeds up the body’s metabolism, which can counteract winter weight gain.

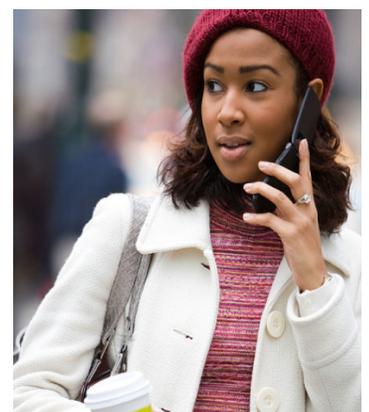
Some tips on increasing your activity levels are:

- Taking up a new indoors activity
- Adding more exercise into daily habits
- Getting out of bed on time, no matter what
- Enjoying the outdoors opportunities that winter provides, through hiking, sledding, or ice skating

Keeping Busy

Once the holiday excitement settles, the challenge becomes how to actively fill our days, and have things to look forward to. Some ways to keep busy are:

- Leaning on a “winter structure,” and a “to do list”
- Taking on a winter project, or a new hobby
- Utilizing the winter time to clean our homes
- Scheduling weekly activities that force us to get out on a regular basis
- Using the winter as a chance to read new books or to experience new movies





Staying Socially Connected

With more indoor time and less desire to go out, winter can become isolating. It is therefore more essential than ever to stay connected to our friends and family. Some good tips for doing that are:

- Spending quality time with family members
- Volunteering to help others
- Staying connected with friends, using them to share feelings and frustrations
- Maintaining face-to-face connections, but also utilizing social

networking, when needed.

Warming the Home Space

Because we spend more time in our homes in the winter, it is essential to bring warmth and interest into our homes. We can make our homes comfortable, personalized winter nests by:

- Surrounding ourselves with sensory pleasures, such as plush rugs and smooth sheets
- Filling the home space with soothing smells, by baking, making soups, or burning scented candles
- Raising indoor plants, including fresh herbs



- Adding “warming rituals,” like hot baths or tea



Eating Healthier

Choosing healthier foods is a good way to counteract the weight gain that often occurs during the holidays. It also speeds up the metabolism, gives more energy, and improves the mood. Some tips for eating healthier during winter months are:

- Choosing healthier “comfort foods,” such as oatmeal, broth-based soups, or spiced cider
 - Avoiding sugar and other high calorie foods
 - Working more fruits and vegetables into the diet
- Finding the healthier choice at restaurants

Knowing When to Seek Help

If the mood swings that occur in winter are severe and pervasive, they could actually be a form of depression called Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). SAD affects 6% of the population, and results from the diminished amount of sunlight in the winter months. Help for SAD may require professional intervention from your personal physician, who may recommend antidepressants, professional therapy, or light therapy.