



Center for Hygiene & Health in Home & Community

Tips for Winter Nutrition & Exercise Practices

In the winter, when activity levels decrease and our metabolism increases due to cold weather, you may find yourself eating more. These factors make it ever more important to involve yourself in physical activities and eat not only a balanced diet, but a nutrient packed diet in this winter.



Eat a Balanced Diet Plus

It's important to eat a balanced diet – consisting of protein, complex carbohydrates, and healthy fats – in order to get all the nutrients your body needs to function. It is particularly important in the winter time to eat foods high in vitamins C, D, E, beta carotene (a form of vitamin A), and essential fatty acids.

Vitamin A

Beta-carotene is a precursor to vitamin A, which helps keeps eyes, skin, and bones healthy – all important factors to keep in mind when exercising outside during the winter. Beta-carotene is readily available in spinach, carrots, squash, broccoli, yams, tomato, cantaloupe, peaches, and grains.

Vitamin C

Vitamin C helps boost immunity, promotes healing, and keeps your skin healthy. This water soluble vitamin is present in squash, green peppers, cabbage, spinach, broccoli, kale, citrus fruits and juices, cantaloupe, banana, kiwi, and strawberries.



Vitamin D

Without vitamin D, bones can become thin, brittle, and soft. It's important to get at least 15 minutes of sunlight everyday because Vitamin D is activated under our skin when we're

exposed to sunlight. This is especially important during the winter months when some people experience Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) because vitamin D can give you a mood boost.

If you're not able to get enough sunlight there are some dietary sources of vitamin D. Only a few foods naturally contain significant amounts of vitamin D, including fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, sardines), cod liver oil, beef liver, and eggs. Fortified foods, such as milk, margarine, breakfast cereals, breads, crackers, cereal grain bars, are the major dietary sources of vitamin D. It is important to read the nutrition facts panel of the food label to determine whether a food provides vitamin D.

Vitamin E

Vitamin E helps support red blood cells that carry oxygen to the tissues and organs throughout the body, which is especially important for the circulatory systems and cardiovascular health. A fat soluble vitamin, vitamin E is present in nuts, seeds, vegetable and fish oils, whole grains (especially wheat germ), fortified cereals, and apricots.

Essential Fats – Omega 3 & 6

Essential fatty acids (EFAs) are necessary fats that our bodies cannot make and therefore must be obtained through diet. EFAs support your immune and cardiovascular systems as well as promote healthy skin. A diet too low in fat can lead to dry, scaly, and itchy skin. Aim for about 30% of your calories to come from fat, with less than 10% saturated fat, by choosing healthier unsaturated fats such as fish, beans, nuts and vegetable oils. Keep trans fat consumption as low as possible.



Prepare for Outdoor Activities



Resist impulses to hibernate during the winter, instead find enjoyable outdoor activities to participate in – the workout will be beneficial as will be the exposure to fresh air and sunlight. There are lots of different activities you can partake in outside such as snowshoeing, trail walking, walking in the park or golf course, skiing, and many others in warmer climates. If exercising outdoors is not an option, consider joining a gym or workout at home. There are many activities you can do inside such as aerobics, yoga, weight-lifting, pilates, housework, etc.

Proper nutrition can help regulate your body's core temperature and keep you warm while fueling your muscles. A drop in body temperature stimulates the appetite. Eating a variety of warm foods during the cold season will help keep your body at a warmer temperature. Consume complex

carbohydrates 2 hours prior to outdoor activities. Some great winter dishes include soups, chili, pasta, casseroles, baked potatoes and hot cereals.

Before heading outdoors make sure to take some precautions. Dressing appropriately for winter weather is essential for keeping you warm in cold temperatures. The American College of Sports Medicine recommends several ways to protect yourself:

Layer Clothing

Layering or combining your clothing enables you to remove clothing as you become warm during outdoor activities. This helps to minimize sweating and avoid shivering.



Cover Your Head

It is important to cover your head while outdoors because heat loss from the head and neck can account for as much as 50 percent of your body's total heat loss while outside.

Cover Your Mouth

Cover your mouth with a scarf or wear a mask to warm air going to your lungs which may help minimize upper respiratory problems. Also consider wearing a sport mouth guard if you ski, skate, or snowboard; this can minimize the risk of tooth injury if you fall.

Protect Your Eyes and Skin

Wear eyewear that protects your eyes from harmful UVA and UVB rays. Sunglasses and ski goggles should block 100% of these harmful rays, if you're not sure about your glasses ask your doctor to check the lenses for you. Wear sunblock and chapstick to not only protect from the sun but also to keep your skin moist.

Stay Dry

Remove and/or change wet, damp clothing which contributes to increased body-heat loss. Choose clothing that wicks away moisture and preserves insulating properties such as garments made with polypropylene, wool, and other fabrics.

Keep Hydrated

In addition to eating a balanced diet it is important to keep well hydrated in the winter. Water is important for all body functions and is a natural internal moisturizer for your skin. When you breathe in cold, dry air your body warms and humidifies that air, and with each following exhalation you lose large amounts of water. When exercising outdoors you will need to replace these water losses frequently.



Drinking enough fluid is important particularly important during winter months when dehydration can easily occur during outdoor activities. Also limit your consumption of alcohol. Alcohol dilates blood vessels, increasing heat loss and promotes dehydration so it's best not to consume alcoholic beverages during exercise and sports activities.



Bring Snacks

Not only do you need plenty of water while playing outdoors, if you are going to be outside for an extended period bring some snacks to keep your energy level up. It is essential for winter athletes to carry at least one emergency food source with them. Plan to eat a 100-200 calorie snack every 30-45 minutes during intense activity. Assorted dried fruit or a granola bar is easy to store in a pocket and provides great nutrition!

Overall, take care of yourself and stay healthy holistically by eating nutritious foods, being active, reducing stress, getting plenty of rest, and having fun this season!