

Tips to Stay Healthy During Winter Weather

The winter months are here, in all their cold and dark glory. With the cold weather, the winter sweets, and the wild spread of illnesses, this is a time in which many students find their health dropping. Here are some tips from Stamps Health Services medical expert Dr. Ben Holton to keep yourself healthy and happy until the sun comes back around.

1) Get enough sleep.

- During the winter months, your body is using much more energy than normal just to stay warm. On top of that, the changes in daylight can disrupt your circadian rhythms and make you feel more sluggish in general. Thus, it is more important than ever to maintain a consistent sleep schedule during the winter. Try to go bed and wake up at the same time as you normally would to keep your internal clock ticking and stave off that winter lethargy.

2) Continue to eat right.

- It's easy to lose focus on your eating habits during winter while you're busy with start-of-term plans and surrounded by winter treats. Here are a few tips to keep in mind during these months to make the task of continuing to eat right easier. Eating a large, protein-filled breakfast can be helpful in staving off cravings later in the day. Be sure to have healthy snacks on hand if they do still come, however. There are certain nutrients that can be useful to pay special attention to during the winter as well, such as omega 3 fatty acids (found in fish and nuts) and fiber, which can reduce pain and aid your immune system, respectively.

3) ...and exercise.

- The freezing days and long nights can make it tempting to just curl up in bed and not leave your dorm until Spring. Unfortunately, giving in to this urge leads to regret later on, as well as a weakened immune system when you need it the most. To make sure you are still exercising regularly, it can be helpful to plan workouts ahead of time so they're harder to skip out on. If you'd rather not go out in the cold, there are plenty of online resources available to help you work out indoors, and if you're on campus, you can go to the gym or the Campus Recreation Center! Maintaining your workout routine in the winter doesn't have to be painful, and your body will thank you later.

4) Take care of your mental health.

- Seasonal Affective Disorder, more commonly known as seasonal depression, is a real issue for about 1 in 15 people, but it is treatable. Keeping up a healthy eating and exercising pattern can do a lot to offset the symptoms of SAD, but there is more you can do to combat your fluctuating mood. Try to get outside in the natural light during the day, and make sure to stay social. Visit your friends or

family, or take yourself on an indoor-outing; you don't have to give up the things you do for fun just because it's cold out. Taking up meditation or visiting the sauna can also give a boost to your mood during this period. Remember, your mental well-being is just as important as your physical health.

5) Protect yourself from sickness.

- Don't make the winter blues worse by adding a flu to the mix! Stay vigilant in the winter months. Remember to wash your hands frequently, and keep them away from your face. Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. Don't share water bottles, drinking straws or cups, or eating utensils. Get your immunizations, especially the yearly flu shot, which you can get at [Stamps Health Services](#). If you do get sick, prevent the spread by staying at home!

Sunny days and warm weather will be back before you know it. Until then, stay safe and healthy out there!

<https://healthinitiatives.gatech.edu/news/expert-tips-stay-healthy-during-winter-weather>