WINTER WELLNESS TIPS

1. **Healthy and Hardy Foods to Keep You Warm.** When the temperature drops and winter arrives, we tend to want to stay indoors and curl up on the couch with our favorite snacks. It’s especially important to ensure that everyone in the family continues to eat healthfully. Keep healthy snacks on hand such as homemade trail mix, sliced veggies with low-fat yogurt or ranch dip, sliced apples or celery sticks with peanut butter. Select sugar free hot cocoa made with low fat or fat free milk. Stay warm with soups and stews made from seasonal vegetables such as butternut squash, carrot or broccoli soup. Choose hearty soups with plant-based proteins such as lentil or pea soup.

2. **Stay Hydrated.** It’s especially important to stay hydrated during the winter months because dehydration is less noticeable. You may feel tired during the day and in the late afternoon because you are not drinking enough water. Staying hydrated helps regulate body temperature and is essential to the function of cells, tissues and organs. Not having enough fluids can cause your core temperature to drop, and in some cases drastically, which can cause hypothermia due to being outside for extended periods of time. Drinking water also boosts your immunity and prevents you from getting sick during peak cold and flu season. Stay hydrated by drinking water instead of sugary drinks. Keep a reusable water bottle with you to always have water on hand.

3. **Boost Your Immunity.** One way to boost the immune system is to include seasonal fruits and vegetables that are rich in the antioxidants vitamin C and beta-carotene. Try these for a nice dose: citrus fruits, cabbage, broccoli, pumpkin, sweet potato, and kale. To increase your immune fighting nutrients any season, make half your plate fruits and veggies and include a rainbow of colors. Exercise also boosts your immunity during cold and flu season. Just a few minutes a day can help prevent infections.

4. **How to Fight the Winter Blues.** Shorter days and lack of sunlight can be the cause for the winter blues, also known as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). With fewer hours of sunlight, the level of a “feel-good” hormone, serotonin, can drop. Not only can sunlight improve many people’s moods, it also helps you get some vitamin D. To assure you maintain your vitamin D levels in the winter, it is important to stay active outdoors and include vitamin D food choices such as: fortified milk and other low fat dairy products, eggs and fatty fish such as salmon. Research has shown there is a connection between food and mood. Healthy choices such as a daily intake of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins, will help beat the winter blues. Staying active and exercising also decreases seasonal depression.
HEALTHY WINTER PICKS....

Cauliflower: Cauliflower is a nutritious, cruciferous vegetable that is high in fiber and packed with antioxidants and is also a good source of vitamin C and vitamin K. It is a versatile vegetable that has been popularly used in healthy low-calorie recipes as a substitute for white potato, bread or rice. It is easy to fill half your plate with fruits and veggies when you are incorporating cauliflower into your recipes.

Kale: Also known for being able to survive in colder temperatures, kale is a dark leafy vegetable that makes a fine addition in a salad, smoothie, or as a side dish to your entree. Kale contains fiber, antioxidants, calcium, vitamin K, and is very low in calories, making it a nutrient-dense, plant-based food choice.

Pears: Pears are high in fiber, low in calories and a good source of vitamins and minerals, including the antioxidant vitamin C. Pears are a versatile fruit. They can be eaten raw, poached, roasted, or blended into a smoothie. Enjoy pears chopped up in salads, roasted with squash or root vegetables, or blend them up to add to soup.

Winter Squash: Look for acorn, butternut, hubbard, spaghetti, and kabocha, to name just a few. Winter squash can be roasted, stuffed or pureed into a soup. Squash is an important source of many nutrients, including vitamin C, magnesium, and other antioxidant compounds.

Recipe Corner

Slow Cooker Lentil Soup

Makes: 6 Servings
Total Recipe Cost: $3.95
Serving Size: 1 Cup
Cost Per Serving: $0.66

Ingredients
- 6 cups water
- ¼ cup fresh parsley, chopped (optional, or 2 tbsp dried parsley)
- 2 teaspoons beef bouillon (or 2 cubes beef bouillon)
- 1 ½ cups lentils (dry)
- 1 carrot (medium, sliced)
- 1 onion (medium, chopped)
- 2 celery stalks (sliced)

Directions
1. Mix all ingredients together in slow cooker
2. Cook on LOW for 8 to 10 hours or HIGH for 4 to 5 hours
3. Serve hot with crackers or bread.

Nutrition Facts

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Image of Slow Cooker Lentil Soup
How to Stay Active on Snow Days

This winter, don’t let the cold weather get in the way of you becoming your best self. Start the New Year with renewed energy and motivation by dressing appropriately for the weather, setting resolutions, having fun and being active with friends and family.

✔ Dress Warm
✔ Make a Goal
✔ Choose Fun Activities
✔ Invite your Friends

There is no reason you need to take a break from physical activity when the temperature drops. In fact, the cooler season may make you feel more awake and energized. This is an advantage over working out and heating up in warmer weather. In fall and winter, you may be able to work out longer due to the cooler temperatures—which means you can burn even more calories and get closer to your fitness goals.

Try these indoor activities:
• Home workout. There are many free exercise videos available
• Dancing
• Active housework like vacuuming and sweeping
• Mall walking
• Bowling
• Roller skating
• Yoga or other fun group classes at your local gym or community center
• Take the stairs instead of the elevator

Try these outdoor activities:
• Brisk walking or hiking
• Jogging or running
• Biking
• Raking leaves
• Shoveling snow
• Ice skating
• Sledding
CHECK OUT THE NEW MYPLATE TOOL!

About half of all American adults have one or more preventable chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, or diabetes. These illnesses are often related to food choices and inactivity. Start Simple with MyPlate provides a variety of easy recommendations that anyone can tailor to fit their individual situation.

MyPlate was originally developed by the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion to help consumers put the 2015-2020 U.S. Dietary Guidelines into practice with meals and snacks. Start Simple is the most recent update to MyPlate and focuses on making half your grains whole, choosing low fat dairy, making half your plate fruits and vegetables, and choosing lean protein.

It’s Tea Time!

Tea consumption fits in perfectly with a heart healthy lifestyle, incorporated into an overall healthy diet of whole grains, beans, fish, low fat dairy, fruits and vegetables, and less processed meats. While a cup of freshly brewed tea contains only a couple calories, processed, sugar-sweetened tea beverages are loaded with extra calories. Components in tea known as flavonoids are good for your heart, and may reduce the risk of certain types of cancer.

The longer you steep your tea, the stronger the flavor and you will drink more health promoting substances. Typically, pour boiling water over your tea bag/leaves and allow it to steep between 5-10 minutes. Remember to keep your tea in a dry, cool place as heat, light and air can break down its healthy components. Shelf life can range from 1-3 years depending on the type of tea. Check your package for expiration dates to gain the most benefit from your tea.