

Dr. Marlene's NATURAL HEALTH CONNECTIONS

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THE WINTER ENERGY BLUEPRINT – PART THREE

Winter Turns Blood Sugar Into a Short Fuse

Why You Feel Fine One Minute... and Drained the Next

This week, I want to talk about blood sugar — not in the somewhat “trendy” way people are talking about it now, but in a practical way that actually matters to how you’re feeling RIGHT NOW. Because winter has a way of making blood sugar regulation more sensitive... and when that happens, you start feeling potentially less “stable”. Let me explain.



Most people don’t describe this as a “blood sugar issue.” They say they’re more tired. Or more irritable. Or that they can’t focus the way they normally can. Or they feel fine one moment... and then suddenly they feel like their brain is not running on 100%..

And what’s so frustrating is that it doesn’t always happen in a predictable way. One day feels manageable. The next day feels like a struggle for no obvious reason. People often tell me, “I don’t feel sick — I just don’t feel steady.” And because energy dips can feel emotional, it’s easy to assume stress or mood is the whole story. I mean, it IS winter and you just made it through the holiday season, am I right?

But blood sugar plays a quiet role in all of this — and winter makes it louder. It’s not that your body suddenly became “broken” in December. It’s that winter changes the conditions your body is working under: less light, more metabolic demand, potentially more stress (again, holidays), less movement. And when the system has fewer supports, blood sugar becomes less forgiving.

Do you see what that means? It does not mean you’re weak, or that you don’t have any willpower, or that you’re “falling apart.” You’re responding to a season that asks more... while giving you less.

The Blueprint: Why Blood Sugar Becomes Less Forgiving in Winter

Blood sugar isn’t just about food. It’s about whether the body can reliably supply fuel to the brain and muscles throughout the day. When that fuel delivery becomes uneven, energy follows right behind — and quickly. Mood often follows too.

And winter disrupts blood sugar stability in a few specific ways that people almost never connect. It isn’t only what you’re eating — it’s the shift in light, cortisol timing, movement, and temperature that makes the system less forgiving.



Cold Increases Demand — Even If You Don't "Feel Cold"

Cold exposure increases baseline energy demand because your body must generate heat to maintain temperature. This isn't optional — your nervous system prioritizes survival. Even if you're indoors most of the time, winter tends to mean cooler air, colder extremities, and a constant small drain on energy.

So what happens when the body needs more fuel... but you're eating the same way you did in summer? The system gets more sensitive. The margins get thinner.

Suddenly, a delayed meal feels worse than it should. A "light" breakfast doesn't hold you. A skipped snack becomes a full-body complaint.

Light Changes Hormone Timing — and Blood Sugar Follows

Cortisol is often framed as a stress hormone, but one of its most important jobs is helping you access energy — especially in the morning. In winter, light arrives later and with less intensity. Cortisol rhythm often shifts later as well, which means the body is slower to mobilize fuel early in the day.

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And when fuel isn't mobilized well, you don't just feel tired. You can feel shaky. Foggy. Unmotivated. Irritable. And people interpret that as mood. But often it's physiology.

If you've ever thought, "Why do I feel off before today has even started?" That's a huge clue.

Less Movement Shrinks the Glucose "Buffer"

Muscles act like a sponge for glucose. They help pull sugar out of the bloodstream and either store it or use it for energy. When movement decreases — even subtly — that sponge shrinks. And in winter, this happens to almost everyone. You may still be exercising, but you're walking less, standing less, and moving less throughout the day, which reduces your overall buffer. Even small things matter here — fewer stairs, fewer errands, fewer "in-between" steps — and the body absolutely notices.

When that happens, blood sugar tends to rise more sharply after meals and fall more sharply later. When the body senses that drop, the nervous system compensates by releasing stress hormones to keep the brain supplied with fuel. It's protective — but it doesn't always feel like hunger.

More often, it shows up as sudden fatigue, cravings, brain fog, irritability, or that desperate feeling that you need something "quick" to feel better. This is why people swear they're eating the same way they always do in winter but feel completely different. Winter removes some of the buffer that warmer months naturally provide, and you feel the dips faster.

So no — your blood sugar isn't necessarily out of control. But it is more exposed and more vulnerable. And if you've had blood sugar issues in the past, winter will often magnify them. That's not discouraging — it's useful information, because once you understand what's happening, you can work with it instead of fighting it.

Try This Today: Supporting Blood Sugar and Energy

Notice the Pattern, Not the “Problem”

Instead of judging an afternoon crash, treat it as information. A crash that feels gradual isn't the same as one that hits like a wall. A drop that comes with fogginess or irritability isn't the same as one that comes with shakiness and urgency. The goal isn't perfect tracking — it's awareness. When you start paying attention to how the crash feels and when it shows up, you learn what your blood sugar is actually doing. And once you know the pattern, you can stop treating it like a personal failure and start treating it like physiology.

Make Earlier Meals Do More Work

If your energy falls apart later in the day, it's often because earlier meals didn't hold you. Winter is the season when breakfast and lunch matter more than most people want them to. Protein and fat early create steadier fuel later. A carb-heavy meal — even a “healthy” one — tends to create a predictable rise and fall, especially if you already have blood sugar sensitivity. The simplest question to ask is: did your earlier meal actually support you, or did it just get you through the moment? Because blood sugar doesn't wait until dinner to tell you the truth.

Use Warmth, Movement, and Hydration as a Blood Sugar Strategy

Cold raises cortisol, and cortisol shifts blood sugar. That's the biology. Keeping your body warm — warm food, warm fluids, warm hands and feet — can reduce stress signaling and make blood sugar feel noticeably steadier. A short walk or gentle movement after meals helps muscles act like the glucose sponge they're designed to be. And hydration matters more than people realize, because blood sugar moves through a fluid system. In winter, warm liquids are often easiest: tea, broth, hot water with lemon. None of this requires a rigid routine. It's simply a way of giving your body the support it's quietly asking for — so energy stops feeling unpredictable.

What's Next?

Part Four of the Winter Energy Blueprint

In Part Four of the Winter Energy Blueprint, we'll look at the missing piece: the nervous system. Winter doesn't just affect food and blood sugar — it pushes cortisol higher and keeps the body more “on,” even when life isn't especially stressful.

We'll break down why that matters, and why calming the stress response often stabilizes energy, cravings, sleep, and mood all at once. For many people, this is the part that makes the whole winter puzzle finally click.

About Dr. Marlene

Dr. Marlene Merritt's passion for natural medicine is fueled by her drive to help others, and her own experience of overcoming a debilitating heart condition, diagnosed at the age of 20. A competitive cross-country cyclist at the time, she suddenly began experiencing severe chest pains. Forced to quit the sport, she suffered from extreme fatigue and constant pain for another 15 years, despite doing everything that conventional, Western medical doctors told her to do.

And then, the tide turned. A physician trained in naturopathic healing recommended a whole-food vitamin E supplement. A week after starting the supplement regimen, her energy began to return, and the pain began to disappear.

Dr. Marlene is a Doctor of Oriental Medicine, has a Master's in Nutrition, and is an Applied Clinical Nutritionist. She is Board Certified in Bariatric Counseling, and certified in the Bredesen MEND Protocol,TM a groundbreaking method of reversing Alzheimer's disease. She sees patients at the Merritt Wellness Centers in Austin, Texas, and Santa Fe, New Mexico, trains health practitioners nationwide, and is the author of *Smart Blood Sugar* and *The Blood Pressure Solution*.



Is your memory getting worse?

If you're over 50, chances are your brain isn't functioning like it did in your younger years.

This isn't surprising. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control warns that over 16 million Americans now live with cognitive impairment. This includes not only memory problems, but also difficulty in learning new things, concentrating, and making important decisions.

Unfortunately, age is the greatest risk factor for cognitive impairment. By age 65, 40% of folks in the U.S. have age-associated memory issues. So as the years go by, it wouldn't be unusual for you to forget things. Or notice how difficult it is to stay focused during a conversation or TV program.

But I have good news. It doesn't have to be that way...

Primal Labs is proud to introduce **CogniForce**, a ground-breaking nutritional supplement for optimal brain support.

CogniForce is an easy-to-swallow gel cap containing 10 powerful nutrients to help you improve cognitive function, memory, and brain health:

- ✓ **Ginkgo:** Improves blood flow to the brain. This supports memory, mood, and focus — and exerts a positive effect on the brain's processing speed to help avoid "senior moments."
- ✓ **L-theanine:** This amino acid stimulates brain neurotransmitters to boost concentration and mood — and promote relaxation.
- ✓ **Acetyl-L-carnitine:** Research shows this amino acid can significantly improve memory and focus — and lift you out of those occasional "blue moods."
- ✓ **The B vitamins riboflavin, vitamin B6, folate, and B12:** Studies show these crucial vitamins help prevent the brain shrinkage many people experience as they grow older.
- ✓ **Sensoril®:** This patented extract of the ancient Ayurvedic herb ashwagandha helps lower cortisol — the stress hormone.

✓ **L-tyrosine:** Another amino acid crucial for production of brain neurotransmitters involved in memory and cognition.

✓ **Bioperine®:** Patented extract of black pepper fruit helps improve absorption of nutrients.

Today, people from all walks of life are protecting their brains with **CogniForce**. Here's what a few of them had to say:

"I have been taking **CogniForce** for about 5 weeks now. I noticed a positive result fairly early. I am feeling more alert and better able to handle tedious work that used to overwhelm me."

– Lee Miller from Austin, TX

"I started taking **CogniForce** fifty-two days ago, and my own forgetfulness has slowed down."

– Hayley Burns from Richmond, VA

"I've been taking **CogniForce** just a little over a month now, and it has helped me improve my thinking and mood swings."

– Barbara Sherwood from Leesburg, FL

If you want to maintain your memory and protect your brain into your 60s, 70s, 80s and beyond... the time to do it is NOW. Join thousands of satisfied users experiencing the brain-boosting effects of **CogniForce**.

We're so confident in the brain and memory-supporting power of **CogniForce**; we offer a 60-day **RISK-FREE** 100% money-back guarantee. You have nothing to lose.

Don't lose your precious memories... get your own bottle of **CogniForce** today — experience life with a sharper, quicker, and more focused brain!



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Monday-Friday 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. CST • Saturday-Sunday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. CST

Q&A

Q: Why do I wake up feeling stiff, even when I sleep well? — Jason L.

A: Morning stiffness is often related to inflammation, circulation, and hydration — not sleep quality alone. While you sleep, you're not moving much, which means circulation naturally slows and tissues can become a little more "stuck." Have you ever woken up and realized you've been in the same position for hours? Your joints and connective tissue notice that, whether you're aware of it or not. And if you're even slightly dehydrated, the tissues are less lubricated, which makes that stiffness feel worse.

Winter tends to amplify this for a few reasons. Cold temperatures reduce circulation, and indoor heating dries the body out, which can increase stiffness even if you don't feel thirsty. Add in inflammation from blood sugar swings, stress, or holiday food choices (yes, I'm looking at the cookies), and suddenly you're waking up feeling like you aged ten years overnight. The good news is that this often responds quickly to simple interventions. Gentle movement, hydration, and warmth first thing in the morning can make a surprisingly big difference. A hot shower, stretching, or even a heating pad on the lower back can help circulation wake up. If stiffness is persistent and lasts longer than 30 to 60 minutes, that can point to deeper inflammatory issues and may be worth exploring further.

Q: Why do I feel lightheaded when standing up quickly? — Erica M.

A: Feeling lightheaded when you stand up can happen when blood pressure temporarily drops as your body shifts position. It's called orthostatic hypotension, and it can be related to hydration, electrolyte balance, medication effects, adrenal function, or nervous system tone. In other words, it's usually a regulation issue — not necessarily dangerous, but worth noticing. It's more common in winter, when people are dehydrated. It can also happen more easily first thing in the morning, when blood volume is naturally a bit lower.

But if it happens frequently, if your vision goes dark, or you feel like you might faint, talk with your provider. One common cause is blood pressure medication that is too strong for your current needs, so if you're on medication and this is happening regularly, call your doctor.

Sometimes the fix is much simpler: hydration and minerals. Winter dehydration is real, even if you don't feel thirsty, and low fluid volume makes blood pressure regulation harder. Adding fluids, electrolytes, or even a small pinch of sea salt can help some people — as long as salt restriction isn't medically necessary for you.



Q: Is it normal for blood pressure to vary from day to day? — Linda C.

A: Yes — some variation is completely normal and expected. Blood pressure is not a fixed number; it's a dynamic response. It changes based on hydration, stress, sleep quality, activity, pain, blood sugar regulation, inflammation, and even what you ate the day before. So if you take your blood pressure at different times of day and it looks different, that doesn't automatically mean something is wrong. It often just means your body is responding to whatever inputs it's dealing with that day.

What matters most is the pattern over time. One high reading doesn't define you, and one normal reading doesn't mean everything is resolved. Trends are far more meaningful than single numbers. If you notice persistent elevations, repeated spikes, or a steady upward trend, that's when it's worth addressing. But day-to-day variation by itself is normal.

Do you have a question for Dr. Marlene?

Send your health-related questions to drmarlene@naturalhealthconnections.com. Please include your first name and the initial of your last name. Although she cannot answer each question directly, Dr. Marlene will select a few in each newsletter and will address other questions and concerns in articles in future issues. Answers are intended for educational purposes only and should not be viewed as medical advice. If you need help with your subscription or have questions about Primal Health supplements, email support@primalhealthlp.com or call 877-300-7849.