



EMPOWERED WELL-BEING

Balancing Health, Happiness, and Community

December 2025



Exercise boosts
your immunity and
lifts your mood.

Winterize Your Exercise

Don't let winter's chill keep you inside and inactive — and interfere with meeting your fitness goals. You may find cold weather a challenge that actually enhances your exercise.

Follow these guidelines to stay safe and comfortable, and have fun.

Shop smart. Today's cold-weather clothing is made of materials designed to insulate and protect your body from cold temperatures, without being bulky or reducing your mobility. Note: Cotton is not a recommended fabric for outdoor clothing in very cold, wet weather.

Dress in layers to keep your body's core warm. Cold temperatures, moisture and high wind cause your body to lose heat. Lock in body warmth by wearing three clothing layers: thin, wicking, non-cotton layer, an insulating layer and a protective shell layer.

Always wear a hat to reduce heat loss. In severe weather, cover your ears with a headband and use glove liners under a pair of heavier gloves.

Wear trail or running shoes with enough traction to prevent slipping, and enough space to allow for thermal socks.

Warm up before going outside to prevent strains, which can occur when muscles are cold. Once outdoors, quickly pick up your pace to stay warm and burn more calories.

Wear reflective gear after dark. Carry a phone for emergencies. Shorten your outdoor workout or skip it during extreme cold, and know when to head home and warm up.

Partner up. Walk your dog or ice skate with the kids. Try snowshoeing, Nordic skiing or enjoy an invigorating jog. Build a snowman or a fort. Go sledding at a local park.

Added benefit: Exercise boosts your immunity during cold and flu season. Just a few minutes a day can help prevent simple bacterial and viral infections, according to the CDC.

City Events

Benefits 101: Patient Safety

Wednesday, December 3

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

[Register here](#)

Mental Health Impacts of a Medical Diagnosis

Friday, December 5

11:30 am – 12:30 pm

[Register here](#)

Making the Most of Family Occasions

Tuesday, December 9

11:30 am – 12:30 pm

[Register here](#)

Deferred Compensation

Investment Options in the Plan

Thursday, December 4

12:00 pm – 12:30 pm

[Register here](#)

Nearing Retirement

Wednesday, December 10

12:00 pm – 12:45 pm

[Register here](#)

Introduction to the Deferred Compensation Plan

Tuesday, December 16

12:00 pm – 12:45 pm

[Register here](#)

Benefits 101: Creating a Well-being Plan

Thursday, December 11

11:00 am – 12:00 pm

[Register here](#)

Goodnight, You!

Monday, December 15

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

[Register here](#)

Manager's Guide to Promoting Family Health

Wednesday, December 17

1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

[Register here](#)

Winter Depression

By Eric Endlich, PhD

As days grow shorter and temperatures drop, many people slip into winter depression, or seasonal affective disorder. While SAD shares many symptoms with major depression — including persistent sadness, fatigue and loss of interest in activities — it also has distinct characteristics. People with SAD often experience increased appetite, carbohydrate cravings, weight gain and excessive sleepiness. These symptoms typically begin in late fall, peak during winter months and lift as spring arrives.

The primary trigger for winter depression is reduced sunlight exposure. Shorter days and longer nights disrupt our internal biological clock that regulates sleep-wake cycles. This disruption affects the production of key brain chemicals which influence mood and sleep. In addition, decreased sunlight can lead to vitamin D deficiency, which may contribute to depressive symptoms.

Other winter-specific triggers include social isolation due to harsh weather, holiday stress and reduced physical activity. The combination of these factors creates a perfect storm for seasonal mood changes.



Geography also plays a role. People living farther from the equator, where winter days are shorter and darker, are more likely to experience SAD. Women and those with a personal or family history of depression are also more susceptible.

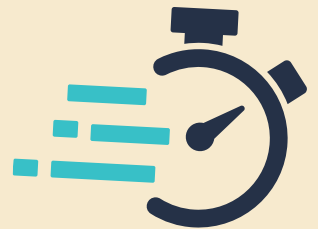
Treatment for winter depression may include:

- Light therapy, consisting of exposure to bright, full-spectrum artificial light — although sunlight exposure helps, too. Look for lights with 10,000 lux.
- Vitamin D supplementation when indicated.
- Regular exercise.
- Socializing.
- Maintaining a healthy diet.
- Psychotherapy and/or antidepressant medication.

Recognizing winter depression as a distinct condition is the first step toward managing it — and feeling more like your normal self.

Warning:

Hurrying is dangerous to your health and safety. It's time to get out of life's fast lane and consciously slow down. Rushing to meetings and constantly multitasking can be life threatening. Distracted driving and speeding cause deadly car accidents, and hurrying is a primary cause of serious injuries from falls, according to the National Safety Council. And rushing spikes stress hormones, raising your blood pressure. Try living in the slow lane.



Breathe Easier in the Cold

Many people love cold weather and participate in cold weather sports. However, there are some breathing risks associated with being out on a very cold day — especially for those with chronic lung diseases.

Most of the time, our healthy lungs can handle a lot. But when winter hits, breathing can feel a lot tougher. Cold air is usually dry, and that dry air can irritate your airways. That's when you might start coughing, wheezing or feeling a burning sensation in your chest. In excessively low temperatures, the chill can cause the muscles around your airways to tighten up — a reaction called a bronchospasm — which makes it harder to breathe. Cold air can also stimulate mucus production. So if you're constantly dealing with sniffing and postnasal drip, it might not be a cold; it could just be the weather.

So how can you protect your lungs when you're outdoors — specifically at temperatures below 20°F? Here are a few ways:

- Cover your face with a scarf or balaclava to trap warm air and keep cold air out.
- Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.



- Keep hydrated. This will help with any mucus buildup and your lungs will be better shielded.
- Avoid other triggers that could irritate your lungs. Dust and vacuum regularly to eliminate dirt particles, use a humidifier, don't smoke and make sure you use all cleaning products in a well-ventilated space.
- Avoid vigorous exercise (e.g., running) outdoors during extreme cold conditions — especially if you have chronic lung issues.
- Take prescribed medication when symptoms arise to help you breathe if you have chronic lung conditions.

Study: Eating more butter

is linked with a higher risk of early death, while eating plant-based oils is associated with a lower risk, according to a recent study which tracked more than 220,000 adults for 33 years.

The highest intake of butter was associated with a 15% higher risk of total mortality compared to the lowest intake. In contrast, the highest intake of oils was associated with a 16% lower total mortality. Also, replacing about two teaspoons of butter daily with plant oils (e.g., olive, canola or soybean) was tied to an 11% lower risk of dying from cancer.

The protective effect of plant oils is likely due to their healthy unsaturated fats and bioactive compounds with anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. Conversely, butter is high in saturated fat, which may increase the risk of diseases such as cancer and heart disease.

The findings support dietary guidelines, which recommend shifting from saturated fats such as butter toward healthier plant-based oils, such as extra-virgin olive oil. **Note:** Corn and safflower oil did not show the same effects.

Navigate Holiday Eating

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

The holidays are a time for celebration, connection and delicious food. From festive dinners to cookie swaps, it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the abundance. But enjoying food doesn't have to come with guilt or a list of strict rules. And the best part of all? You can enjoy the tastes of the holiday season and still prioritize your health.

Start by skipping these common holiday eating pitfalls:

- 1 Saving up for a big meal by skipping other meals:** This strategy can backfire, leaving you so hungry that you overeat at the big meal. Instead, aim to keep a regular eating pattern throughout the day, which helps manage hunger and makes it easier to enjoy holiday favorites in satisfying, balanced portions.
- 2 Giving in to the all-or-nothing mindset:** You do not have to skip your holiday favorites, even if they are high in calories, sugar or fat. Instead, enjoy small portions of these festive foods. That's so much better than having none at all.
- 3 Believing that one indulgent meal will ruin your healthy habits:** Eating well is about following the pattern day after day, month after month, year after year. It's not about one meal. Instead of worrying about a single dinner, remember that food is not just about health. Festive meals are about culture, comfort and family connection. Give yourself permission to enjoy your favorite holiday dishes in moderate portions.
- 4 Replacing calories from food with calories from alcohol:** Do you eat less food so you can indulge in more wine and eggnog with alcohol? It's better to sip less alcohol and enjoy a balanced meal instead. Enjoy one alcohol-based drink, then switch to sparkling water or sugar-free mocktails.



Whether it's your aunt's shortbread or the best mashed potatoes, you can honor tradition, nourish your body, and keep food joyful at the same time. Try to find moderation rather than restriction.

Getting Protein from Animal Products

A new survey from the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine found that nearly 90% of U.S. adults mistakenly think that animal products, such as beef, chicken or eggs, are needed for adequate protein. (The PCRM is a non-profit organization that promotes animal rights). The truth? You can also rely on plant-based protein for building and maintaining muscle, as long as you get enough of it. Foods such as tofu, chickpeas, lentils and beans are rich in protein. Plus, they offer added benefits: They're high in fiber and low in saturated fat. Health experts are increasingly recommending more plant-based protein sources instead of animal-based sources for better health.

Green Beans with Pomegranate and Almonds

½ cup sliced almonds
2½ cups (about 1 lb.) green beans, trimmed

1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
½ tsp each salt and pepper
Seeds from 1 pomegranate

In a small pan, toast almonds over medium heat until fragrant and just beginning to brown. **Set** aside. **Over** medium-high heat, bring a large pot of water to a boil. **Prepare** a large bowl of ice water on the side. **Add** the green beans to boiling water. **Cook** 5 minutes. Drain and add to ice water for 5 minutes. **Drain** and add green beans to large platter. **Drizzle** with olive oil. **Add** salt, pepper, almonds and pomegranate. **Stir** and serve.

Makes 4 servings. Per serving: 110 calories | 2g protein | 5g total fat | 0.5g saturated fat | 2.5g mono fat | 1g poly fat | 17g carbohydrate | 10g sugar (0g added sugar) | 5g fiber | 295mg sodium



Use Your 2025 FSA Funds Wisely Before the Deadline. Are you looking for creative ways to spend your remaining Health FSA balance by December 31, 2025? You can explore eligible and ineligible expenses [here](#) or shop at [FSAStore.com](#) for products that are 100% FSA eligible. If you want to use your remaining Daycare FSA balance, see eligible expenses [here](#). Navia Benefits will carry over up to \$660 of unused 2025 Health FSA balances if not spent by year-end. The carryover will be applied in January 2026. However, there is no carry-over allowed for the Daycare FSA – any unused balance will be forfeited after December 31, 2025.

Save More Money with Your Vision Benefit: As a VSP member, you can unlock over \$3,000 in savings through [Member Extras](#). Receive up to \$1,100 off a Lasik procedure, save up to \$300 on your annual supply of contacts, or thousands on your hearing aids. Get discounts on travel and entertainment, including movie tickets, hotels, and rental cars through VSP Simple Values. Register [here](#) for Simple Values.

Managing Holiday Stress with EAP Support: The holidays can be stressful with extra demands and expectations. Focus on self-care, set realistic priorities, and lean on supportive connections. Remember, your CompPsych Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offers confidential counseling and resources to help you manage challenges and protect your well-being. All City of Seattle employees and their household members are eligible for EAP services. To reach CompPsych, call **1-888-272-7252**; TRS: Dial 711. Online at [www.guidanceresources.com](#); Registration Web ID: SeattleEAP.

Q: Do portable air purifiers have any health benefits?

A: Yes, air purifiers can have health benefits. Portable models remove particles and gases from indoor air. The particles they take out include pollen, dust, smoke, humidity, bacteria and viruses. Gases such as carbon monoxide and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) can be removed with special filters. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), air cleaners may help alleviate certain health conditions.

Allergies and asthma: Reducing the amounts of pollen, dust, smoke and animal dander in the air may help improve hay fever and asthma symptoms. Look for purifiers with HEPA filters.

Cardiovascular disease: Indoor air pollutants contribute to heart disease and stroke. An EPA review found that regular use of air purifiers can improve cardiovascular health.

Viral illnesses: Some air purifiers may effectively filter contagious viruses from the air, according to the EPA. Look for purifiers that remove 0.1 to 1 micron-sized particles or have a high clean air delivery rate for smoke (small particle) removal. Additionally, a portable air purifier should be the right size for the indoor space.

Annual Safe Gift Guide

When you're selecting gifts for friends, family and coworkers, why not choose something that shows you care and keeps them safe? Here are a few ideas for everyone on your list:

For coworkers:

- Self-cleaning insulated water bottles.
- Solar electronic chargers.

For elderly parents or friends:

- Motion light for under the bed.
- Weekly pill organizer with reminder alarms.

For the traveler:

- Ultra-thin wallet with RFID protection.
- Portable phone charger.

For the gardener:

- Garden gloves with reinforced fingertips.
- UV protection sun hat or clothing.

For children:

- Bike or scooter helmet with a fun design.
- Backpack lights or reflector stickers.

For everyone:

- CPR training class.
- Fire blanket.



December is Safe Toys and Gifts Month.

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