

**Information to Optimize Your Health & Fitness, Naturally**

**Here comes the Winter – Stay Healthy!**

While the change in seasons is a wonderful time of year, it's a good time to start looking at ways to prevent those common winter illnesses that combined with the wet weather, seem to last all season. Depending on how ill one is will affect training and performance. Obviously, staying well is key to a healthy and productive winter sports season.

Here are some tips to ward of illness this winter:

**1. Become a habitual hand washer:**

Yes, its true – frequent hand washing is perhaps the best defense we have against catching colds and flus. Think of all the things you touch throughout the day, that someone else has as well. Even more important, avoid touching any part of your face (especially eyes, nose and mouth) if you haven't washed up recently...those places are direct routes for bugs to gain entry into your body.

**2. Improve your diet:**

- Increasing amounts of vitamin and mineral-rich foods will supply your immune system with the nutrients it needs for high performance.
- Decrease sugary/processed foods – large amounts of sugar are really never a good idea, and it can hamper your ability to ward off illness.
- Keep drinking plenty (8- 8 ounce glasses) of water. You need the same amount as in the summer even though you may not be as thirsty
- Get more healthy fats in your diet from fish or fish oil supplements. These fats have numerous health benefits, including keeping you illness-free. (You can also get these fats from nuts in seeds, but you need to a lot of them!)

**3. Remember, frequent illness is not due to an antibiotic deficiency!**

Repeatedly taking antibiotics only increases the chances of getting sick again, or improperly treating an illness. 90% of winter illnesses are caused by viruses, which cannot be treated by antibiotics. If you get ill more than twice a year, you may want to consider addressing this from a whole-body perspective. This includes looking at diet, medication use and history, and directly treating the immune system so it can keep you from getting ill in the first place.

**4. Will exercise decrease my chances of becoming sick this winter?**

Yes! Newer evidence shows that a moderate amount of exercise will boost

the immune system against “upper respiratory infections”, i.e. colds. However, very strenuous exercise has the opposite effect and can leave you susceptible to getting ill. If you have mild symptoms, then it is probably safe to exercise. The rule of thumb is: if the symptoms are all located above the neck (sore throat, stuffy/runny nose, etc) then you can safely exercise (as long as the symptoms don't get worse after exercise). If the symptoms are below the neck (and more severe), one should wait until they are gone before exercising. Examples of these symptoms include fever, productive cough, body aches, vomiting, etc.

#### **5. When should I seek medical help?**

While not a simple answer, you should see a doctor if you have a high fever, a productive or painful cough, wheezing, nausea, vomiting or extreme fatigue/malaise. The symptoms of most run-of-the-mill colds should pass in about 5-6 days, generally. If symptoms do not pass from a mild illness, this is a good time to get medical attention as well.

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