

# Avoid Succumbing To Cold And Flu Season

Winter's arrival coincides with the arrival of other things as well. The holiday season. Snow days from school. Weekends spent skiing and snowboarding with family and friends.

While each of those things is something to look forward to, one thing also synonymous with winter is never welcomed with open arms. Cold and flu season impacts nearly every household each winter, forcing kids and adults alike to put life on hold as they rest and recover. To many people, flu shots are enough to keep them going strong through cold and flu season, but not everyone has access to flu shots. Even those who do might still get colds if they don't take steps to stay healthy when the mercury drops. This winter, people wanting to avoid the worst of cold and flu season can take several precautions to reduce their risks of getting a cold or the flu.

## Around the House

People can take several steps to make their homes safer and warmer, which should help them reduce their risk of cold and flu. Winterizing a home is perhaps the best thing a homeowner can do to make a home safer and warmer. Install storm windows and caulk around doors and windows to keep warm air in the home and prevent cold air from coming in.

If winter has yet to arrive, inspect the heating system. If winter has already arrived, schedule an inspection

as soon as possible. Make sure the system is working properly and is clean and ready for the winter that lies ahead. Ideally, the heating system should be serviced by a professional to ensure the ventilation is working properly.

Homeowners with functioning fireplaces in their homes should have the fireplace inspected and cleaned before using it for the first time.

## Addressing Attire

Winter weather should never catch adults or children offguard with regards to their wardrobe. Once cold weather arrives, dress appropriately whenever leaving the home to reduce the risk of cold and flu. Appropriate attire includes wearing outdoor clothing, such as winter coats, scarves, gloves or mittens, and wool ski hats. Those who live in areas with heavy snowfall should also wear waterproof boots whenever going outside. It's also important to dress in layers throughout the winter. Doing so provides extra insulation, and layers trap air effectively, ensuring that all that warm air produced by your body won't escape but will stick around and keep you warm.

## Prepare for Emergencies

If a winter weather emergency arrives, cold and flu won't shut down and stop working just because schools close or power outages occur. In fact, during an emergency the chances are strong that families will be stuck inside

for extended periods of time. When locked indoors for long periods of time, cold and flu viruses can spread easily. Men and women should prepare for such a scenario by having an air filter on hand to ensure air quality remains clean and healthy. In addition, stock up on items such as soup or cold and cough medicine to ensure that anyone who succumbs to cold and flu during a weather emergency will have remedies at their disposal should they be confined to the home.

Parents of infant children should keep extra formula and diapers on hand and be sure there are extra batteries around the house should the power go out. For infants on medication, consult the child's physician before cold and flu season and devise a plan of caring for a sick child should a weather emergency occur.

## Get Outside and Exercise

Staying indoors all winter might seem like a great way to avoid cold and flu, but it might actually make adults and children more susceptible. Staying indoors could be trapping you indoors with stagnant air where cold and flu germs are floating around. Stay inside during weather emergencies, but be sure to get outside in the fresh air and exercise when the weather allows. Regularly working out boosts the body's immune system, which helps ward off cold and flu.



Spending time outdoors and dressing properly are two ways to reduce risk for cold and flu.

## Is Gluten-Free The Way To Be?

From restaurants to food packaging, it is difficult to escape the gluten-free craze that is sweeping the country. Whether as their own dietary preference or for a specific health reason, many people are eschewing gluten products and leaving other people wondering if they should, too.

Gluten is a type of protein that is found in grain products, including wheat, barley and rye, among other carbohydrates. Not all cereals and grains contain gluten, so it's important to note that gluten and grain are not synonymous. Gluten is not the grain itself, but a component that gives certain grain products their chewy, bending texture. It's also what contributes to the rising process of doughs brought on through the kneading of the dough. Gluten is tough, which is why doughs and bagels containing gluten have a dense, thick composition. Products that have gluten removed tend to be sticky and goopy in consistency and without shape.

Individuals with a condition called celiac disease cannot properly digest gluten. According to the National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse, celiac disease is an immune disease in which people cannot eat gluten because it will damage their small intestine. The disease is hereditary and, despite millions of confirmed cases, many more people are unaware that they even have celiac disease.

Many other people do not suffer from celiac disease but do experience sensitivity to gluten-containing products -- everything from gastrointestinal discomfort to migraines and fatigue. According to experts from the Gluten Intolerance Group of North America, much still

remains unknown about gluten sensitivity, but it is clear that gluten sometimes triggers an immune response like an enemy invader in some people today. As a result, many find that avoiding gluten helps mitigate symptoms.

Although there are people who have legitimate reasons to avoid gluten, many are jumping on the gluten-free bandwagon simply because they believe gluten could be something evil lurking in their foods. A paper published in the New England Journal of Medicine may be at the root of this newfound fear of gluten. The paper advised that several diseases may have a root cause with gluten. Some of these diseases include:

- \* irritable bowel syndrome
- \* cancer
- \* rheumatoid arthritis
- \* anxiety and depression
- \* dementia
- \* epilepsy
- \* canker sores
- \* anemia

The trouble with healthy people removing gluten from their diets is that it can cause some deficiencies. The body actually requires grains to receive the daily recommended value of certain vitamins and nutrients. These include calcium, riboflavin, folate, thiamin, iron, and fiber. Gluten, being a protein, is also a viable protein source for the body. Individuals who are vegetarians often get protein through legumes and grains. Adopting a gluten-free diet in addition to being vegetarian removes another protein source.

While there is no actual danger to eating gluten-free, doctors advise ensuring you're getting the adequate vitamins and nutri-

ents through other sources to compensate for the lack of nutritional value from grains.

Those adopting a gluten-free diet should be careful to read product ingredients to determine if gluten is present. While key words like wheat, oats, barley, and rye indicate gluten, malt and hydrolyzed vegetable protein are also indicators that gluten is in the food.

Although most traditional breads are off-limits to those with gluten sensitivity, there are many products being marketed mainstream that are made with rice or potato flour instead. Cereals made from corn and rice are good alternatives to those made with gluten-containing grains. Traditional pastas are also off-limits. People can try substituting rice noodles for wheat noodles in recipes.

Gluten is not exclusive to foods, either. Beer contains wheat, so it will also have gluten. Choose wines or other liquors instead. Also, some products, like lip balm, also contain gluten. Therefore, it's best to be aware of all gluten sources and not assume it is only relegated to foods.

Although many people are adopting gluten-free lifestyles, removing the protein from your diet is only medically necessary at this point if you suffer from celiac disease or gluten sensitivity.



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## Concerns About Obesity

## Four Simple Steps To A Healthier You

(ARA) - The growing obesity rates in the United States have companies, health care workers and even the government discussing concerns about the physical and mental health effects and costs associated with weight gain. According to a recent estimate, by 2030 - in less than 20 years - 65 million more American adults may be obese.

There are, fortunately, ways to reverse this devastating trend. By taking responsibility of your own health and wellness, obesity can be controlled. Start with a goal, but make it a realistic one that will have you feeling a sense of accomplishment when you achieve it, and ultimately, maintain it.

The following steps can help you take charge of your weight loss, achieve your goal and become a healthier person:

**1. Create a supportive environment.** Talk with your family, friends and coworkers. Get people on your side to encourage and support you. Ask them to help you keep your goal a priority, and to provide constructive feedback when you meet difficult challenges that could potentially interfere with accomplishing your goal.

**2. Talk with your doctor.** Bring your doctor on board early on to help you set a goal and

ensure you make healthy weight-loss decisions. In fact, a recent study in The Lancet indicates that overweight and obese patients referred to Weight Watchers by their physician lost more than twice as much weight on average when compared to those who received only standard care. They were also more than three times as likely to lose 10 percent or more of their initial weight. Moreover, 61 percent of patients in the Weight Watchers group finished the study having lost at least 5 percent of their body weight (32 percent did so in the standard care group). Weight loss between 5 and 10 percent is shown to have significant health benefits and reduces the risks of diabetes and heart disease.

"The Lancet study results suggest that those patients in the study who were referred to Weight Watchers were able to be much more engaged and benefited from the intense support the weekly meetings provided and made them feel more accountable for their weight loss efforts," says Karen Miller-Kovach, chief scientific officer for Weight Watchers International. "This reinforces the importance of group support for long-term behavioral change and sustain-

able weight loss."

**3. Get moving.** Being active can help weight loss and is critical to maintaining weight loss. Find an activity that you enjoy, and begin to include it in your daily activities. Also try exploring some new activities that involve different muscle groups in your body. For example, cross country skiing and snowshoeing are great activities to try during the winter months, while exploring the pristine white countryside. And if you prefer to stay indoors, explore options in your community, such as water aerobics classes for a low-impact work out.

**4. Re-evaluate regularly.** As you go through your weight loss process, re-evaluate your personal motivation, and check in with your doctor, family, friends on a frequent basis to review how you are doing in accomplishing your goal. Continue to set small, attainable goals such as a 5 percent weight loss.

Obesity is a condition you can control, and with some help, you can successfully achieve your weight loss goals that can lead to a healthier, happier you and the start a new statistical trend for 2030.

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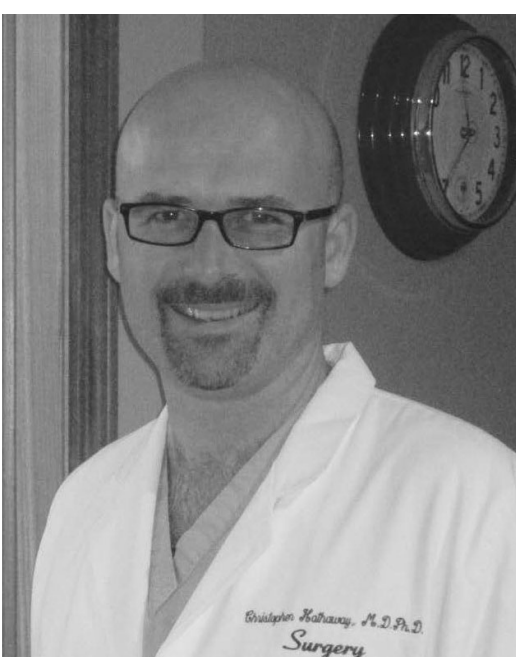


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