



HEALTHY LIVING

Happy New Year!

Happy Eating

Post-holiday promises often involve starting the new year with a healthier eating plan and contrary to popular belief, this endeavour doesn't have to include being on a liquid diet. You can still enjoy your everyday meals as long as you keep in mind food portions and add a few key food items to help increase your nutritional intake.

Registered Dietician, Leslie Beck, suggests the following:

- **Seeds, particularly chia seeds and flaxseed (ground)** – both are loaded with anti-inflammatory omega-3 fatty acid and cited as a great source of fibre. Blend chia seeds in smoothies or sprinkle some flaxseed on your yogurt, breakfast cereal or salad.
- **Tumeric** – Not only does this spice add flavour to food, it is also packed with curcumin, which is a phytochemical (chemical compound that occurs naturally in plants) shown to combat inflammation, free radicals and cancer-causing agents. When cooking rice or quinoa, try adding

¼ teaspoon to the water. You can also mix it into salad dressings or over vegetables before roasting.

- **Walnut oil** – You won't find a shortage of omega-3 fatty acid in this polyunsaturated oil. Create your own salad dressing by mixing it with olive oil and some lemon juice for a nutty-tasting flavour. Just note that walnut oil isn't intended for high-heat cooking, such as barbequing.
- **Nutritional yeast** – This food item isn't like the ingredient to make bread rise. Instead, nutritional yeast is deactivated yeast (has no leavening quality), which takes form as flakes or yellow powder and used as a condiment. Its richness in B vitamins, especially B12, is what makes it so good for you. Try adding it over pasta, popcorn, and baked potatoes because it has a cheesy flavour.
- **Unsweetened cocoa** – Cocoa is packed with flavonoids, which are known to relax blood vessels, improve blood flow, lower blood pressure and reduce inflammation. The next time you are making chili or stew, try to sprinkle some unsweetened cocoa to make the meal even better for you.

HEALTHY HEART

Bundle Up

Possible Link Between Cold Weather and Getting Sick

We've all heard it from our mothers: "Put on a jacket or you'll catch a cold." Is this true? Does the cold weather increase the odds of catching a cold? Research has pointed to a possible connection.

We all understand that whether we catch a cold or flu depends on exposure to the virus. Since the virus is airborne, we are more susceptible to getting sick if an infected person sneezed, coughed or even talked to us vs. touching an infected surface. Previous research has hypothesized that we are likely to get sick in the winter months because we are indoors more often, thus allowing for easier transmission of the virus in a confined space. However, the research doesn't provide an explanation as why we don't get sick as often during the summer months when there are plenty of people residing indoors to escape the heat.

There had to be a different explanation.

In 2007, a study published in the journal *PLOS Pathogens* suggested that the flu bug survives best in cold, dry air with low temperatures, around 5 degrees Celsius – namely the winter months. Summer months where temperatures are up to 30 degrees impede the virus' ability to spread quickly and easily. The same conditions also apply to the cold bug, according to the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

When the temperature dips to 5 degrees, it makes sense to wear a jacket before going outside. Although the cold air doesn't actually cause you to get sick, you will at least feel warmer and more comfortable while preparing to combat the various bugs in the air, now that we know they are at their most potent.



HEALTHY MIND

Out of the Blue

How to Beat the SAD Times

Do you find yourself feeling a little more tired or withdrawn from your social circle during the dark, wintry months? If so, you are not alone nor are you imagining these feelings in your head.

In addition to the plunging temperatures outside, and shorter days, winter can also affect our health and well-being. We've all experienced a little bit of winter blues, but when individuals want to sleep a few more hours per day every day, undergo extreme weight gain and have difficulty with everyday functioning because of lethargy or depression, they may have a condition called Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

The Canadian Mental Health Association isn't certain on the causes of SAD but believes it may have something to do with the lack of sunlight. The condition is also believed to run in the family as 13 to 17% of people who develop SAD have an immediate family member with the same diagnosis.

Overall, about 2 to 6% of Canadians will experience

My Health TM

JANUARY 2016

Healthy Heart, Healthy Mind, Healthy Living

SAD in their lifetime. Another 15% will experience a milder form of SAD, according to the Mood Disorders Association of Ontario.

One thing for certain is you should not diagnose yourself without consulting your doctor. But if you do have a confirmed diagnosis of SAD, there are treatments that you could try. Some of which include:

- **Light therapy** – This form of therapy has been shown to be quite effective for many individuals. It involves sitting close to an intense artificial light for about 30 minutes daily. During this time, it is said that the light causes a chemical change in the brain to help improve your mood and lessen the SAD symptoms. Do consult your doctor before proceeding as there are some side-effects to this treatment.
- **Counselling** – Better known as cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), this form of treatment works by working with a specialized health professional to coach you to break negative patterns and other thoughts that might spiral into something more severe.

- **Self-help** – There are lots of everyday things that you can do to improve your situation even if you are already undergoing other treatment options. For example, you can try to exercise regularly, eat a healthy diet, develop good sleep habits, manage your stress level, connect with family and friends, and engage in balanced thinking techniques.
- **Medication** – As always, talk to your doctor to see if this is the right course of treatment for you. Medication works differently on different people. There may be side effects from the medication that you need to be aware of.

2 to 6%

of Canadians will experience SAD in their lifetime.



Source: Mood Disorders Association of Ontario

TRG
GROUP BENEFITS

