



Winter wonders

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Vitamin C? Check. Garlic? Check. But what about some of the more unusual ways to stay well in winter? Charmaine Yabsley asks our experts.
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WE tend to get between two and four colds and bouts of flu during the colder months. Seven of the top holistic health wellness experts weigh in with their ideas on how to stay well all year round.

1. Consider keto

"Most of us would associate 'going keto' with losing weight, or, more specifically, losing body fat," says Vicky Kuriel, dietitian and founder of Eat Play Thrive. "But having ketones present in your blood also has numerous other health benefits, many of which are only just now being uncovered. One example is that increased blood levels of ketones have been shown to control chronic inflammation. Inflammation is a mechanism our bodies use to deal with combating infections, repairing tissue, and the consequences of traumatic injury. Too much inflammation is a problem many people face as a result of our environment and lifestyle. Ketones have anti-inflammatory properties and inhibit numerous inflammatory pathways within the body.

"So - how do you increase ketone levels in your blood? A combination of a low carbohydrate diet with some intermittent fasting is the quickest and most effective way to boost ketone levels, because this combination forces your body to begin using fat as a main fuel source. When fat is broken down, ketone bodies in your blood increase. Production of

energy from ketones is both efficient and clean, a combination that will give you the ammunition to fight disease more effectively, and also leave you feeling amazingly energised."

2. Balance your life

Health and lifestyle author Kylie Nation advises: "Cultivate a daily practice of gratitude: take the time to do something you love every single day, and make the most of those rainy days to appreciate your body. The body's first line of defence against germs is the skin and mucous membranes, along with immune cells called T cells and B cells that circulate in the bloodstream. Drink lots of water and make the most of nature's best

doctors - fresh air, movement, sunshine and rest - whenever you can. Colds and flu can creep up when we hold onto things that we don't need any more, so if you feel 'blocked', don't fight it. A little yoga goes a long way. Grab your pillow and allow yourself five minutes on your mat to restore the body and simply be in the moment.

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“Cutting out refined sugar and eating fermented, nutrient- and probiotic-rich whole foods, like sauerkraut, yoghurt, and kefir, both help your body heal and provide a great foundation for keeping the immune system strong. With over 70 percent of the body’s immune system located in the digestive tract, keeping the gut healthy is super-important. And warm up with tea. There are so many beautiful herbal blends that support the immune system. Try lemon and ginger, the ultimate detox combo, or peppermint, which is always soothing, or matcha or rooibos, for an antioxidant boost.”

3. Be your own trainer

“I have spent my life researching ways to get and stay well,” says Amelia Phillips, nutritionist, trainer and co-founder of Voome. She suggests the following ideas:

Dry skin brushing “This is an ancient Ayurvedic technique where a soft bristle brush is used on the skin in a stroking motion, directed towards the heart. It aids lymphatic drainage and helps prevent lymphatic congestion, which has been linked to inflammation and disease. It’s also a great skin exfoliator, boosts circulation and some say it reduces the appearance of cellulite.”

Great news! Having sex once or more per week boosts levels of immunoglobulin, which is the first line of defence against colds and flu viruses.

Sweat it out “Sweating eliminate toxins, such as alcohol, cholesterol and salt. It boosts circulation and metabolism, prevents skin blemishes, and lowers our risk for kidney stones. It also has antibacterial properties. In one study, researchers found that dermcidin, a natural substance in sweat, acts like an antibiotic on the skin and can prevent colds. Try Bikram (hot) yoga, regular saunas, or visit voome.com.au/programs.

Get some sun An estimated four million Australians suffer from vitamin D deficiency. During winter, a person with moderately fair skin should aim for between seven to 40 minutes of sun exposure on the face, and leave their arms exposed. People with darker skin need three to six times more exposure. The further north you are, the less sun you need. Do some of your workouts outdoors, or schedule ‘moving meetings’ with co-workers.

Turn up the humidity Flu viruses thrive where humidity is low. Using a humidifier in the bedroom may prevent them spreading. Add a few drops of eucalyptus or tea tree oil to clear blocked sinuses.

4. Eat real food

“As the days get shorter and colder, finding the motivation to stay fit can be difficult,” says Scott Gooding. “Often exercise is sacrificed for cosy evenings on the couch, munching on comfort foods. That can lay the foundation for a weakened immune system, as well as piling on unwanted kilos. The first step to stay on track nutrition-wise in winter is to focus on real food rather than processed alternatives. Avoid sugar because it affects our hormones and is the mechanism for weight gain. The same goes for highly processed carbohydrates, so be mindful of the hidden traps of sugar in all shapes and forms. We humans are hard-wired for sugar and carbs as they trigger the neurotransmitter dopamine, making us feel warm and fuzzy. Try these supplementary tricks to clear brain and body fog, leaving you energised, alert and healthy:”

Magnesium “Essential for the function of every organ in the body, plus taking a magnesium supplement is important today due to industrial farming methods and the decline in soil quality. Magnesium-rich foods include spinach, nuts, dark chocolate, and seeds. Aim for 400mg a day if using a supplement and look for the chelated form - those ending in -ate, like citrate, glycinate and taurate - which tend to be the best absorbed.”

Turmeric “Can be taken in powder or capsule form, as can its active ingredient, curcumin. I recommend taking the complete version of the plant – that is, turmeric - as you’ll be getting valuable co-factors which support a multitude of enzyme processes and make the body work efficiently. Turmeric also promotes the use of BDNF, our brain’s neural ‘fertiliser’.

Add collagen Meals that use joints of meat, such as osso bucco or lamb shoulder, will provide more collagen and gelatine than lean cuts. The more connective tissue in the meat, the more collagen and gelatin you will get. Bone broth, bought or home-made, is a rich source of both collagen and elastin, which are incredibly potent sources of complete amino acids and support healthy hair, nails, tendons, muscles and ligaments.”

5. Keep it natural

“High stress levels compromise the immune system, so explore ways to reduce stress - meditation, yoga, and taking time out,” says Fiona Tuck, author of *The Forensic Nutritionist*. “Eighty percent of our immune system stems from the gut, so healthy gut function is imperative. Reduce sugary drinks, alcohol, caffeine and processed foods. Focus on nutrient-rich fresh wholefoods, home-made soups and broths. I also recommend these natural remedies:”

Oil of oregano “Extracted from the oregano plant, this contains powerful antioxidant, anti-



inflammatory, and antibacterial compounds. It can be used as an internal supplement to ward off colds and flu, as a gargle for a sore throat, in vaporisers for sinus congestion and chest infections, or applied topically to treat skin breakouts and infections, and cold sores. You can buy it from health food stores and pharmacies."

Orange and yellow produce "The antioxidant vitamins C and A play an important role in keeping the immune system strong, so eat plenty of citrus fruits, capsicums, tomatoes, berries, rhubarb, for vitamin C, and pumpkin, sweet potato and carrots, for beta carotene."

Garlic "Raw garlic contains allicin, which is released when the garlic is chopped or crushed. Allicin contains antimicrobial properties and may assist the immune system to fight colds and flu."

Onions "These alleviate sinus congestion and strengthen the immune system. The antioxidant and anti-inflammatory compounds quercetin and allicin found in raw onions help fight bacteria and viruses. They're most powerful when eaten raw, so add raw onion to winter salads or cut up raw onion and add to soup just before serving."

6. Tune into Ayurveda

"Your digestion is stronger in winter, and in Ayurveda it is a time for eating well, resting, and building up immunity," says TV chef and cookery writer Anjum Anand. "This is linked to the Ayurvedic belief that you build up good immunity from digesting your food well. So, winter is almost a time for us to 'hibernate', so we emerge stronger, for the rest of the year."

"Eat like you are vata, which means eating one-pot meals, soups, curries, and porridge. These are easy to digest, nourishing, warming, and sustaining, but don't eat too much, or it will make you sluggish. Eat food that is natural - vegetables, fruits, grains, and lentils. Also, fat is good in winter, because it's moistening and grounding. Ayurveda's two favourites fats are ghee and unroasted sesame oil. Salads, raw foods, and cold foods and drinks should be avoided in winter because they will dampen your strong, digestive winter fire."

"Eating in a calm space in a calm mood aids digestion. Stress, anger, irregular meals, late nights and a general lack of routine affects digestion. The body likes regularity and it functions best when you go to sleep early and wake up early. Treat yourself to oil massages: sesame oil is an Ayurvedic favourite for winter, as it is also warming. In India, they recommend a self-massage every morning to get your circulation going - it is our version of applying moisturising cream every morning."

"If you do get sick, turmeric is your friend. Drink lots of fluids, and eat little bits of easy-to-digest food - a lentil or vegetable soup or khicheri,

a turmeric-tinted lentil and rice porridge, are favourites. I add a ¼ teaspoon of turmeric to a pan in which I have heated ½ a teaspoon of ghee and then add milk or nut milk and finish off the heat with a little honey and give that to my children every night when they have a cold. For best absorption of curcumin, the active ingredient in turmeric, it should be cooked in a little fat and black pepper. So really, a curry a day will keep the doctors at bay!"

7. Eat for immunity

"The best defence against unwanted visitors is our immune system," says nutritionist Zoe Bingley-Pullen. She suggests:

Eat chicken soup for breakfast

"Chicken and vegetable soup is a good source of protein, which the immune system relies on to fight pathogens, and an array of vitamins and minerals. Add garlic, ginger and turmeric to your soup for additional antioxidants."

Drink garlic tea "In a heat-proof cup, place 1 chopped garlic clove and 2 teaspoons of freshly grated ginger, add 1 cup of boiling water, and steep for 2-3 minutes. Strain off garlic and ginger, add 1 tablespoon of fresh lemon juice and honey to taste. Drink this if you feel the start of a cold or flu or as a daily health tonic."

Say no more often "A sore throat, snuffle or feeling tired should not be ignored. The best thing you can do for yourself is to stay home, say no to invitations and demands, get a good night's sleep and eat a very nourishing home-cooked meal."

Eat more, and better "Without an adequate nutrient intake, the body does not get the energy it needs to fuel immune function. Count nutrients, not calories, and substitute any foods not serving your health with wholefoods." ❄️

Meet our experts



Vicky Kuriel, dietitian and Founder of Eat Play Thrive, www.eatplaythrive.com.au



Kylie Nation runs Nourish from The Inside Out Fermenting Classes, www.KylieNation.com



Amelia Phillips, nutritionist, trainer and co-founder of Voome, www.voome.com.au



Scott Gooding is a My Kitchen Rules semi-finalist, and Whirlpool ambassador.



Fiona Tuck is the author of the Forensic Nutritionist, www.fionatuck.com



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