

WINTER NUTRITION

Key Nutrients to Beat the Cold-Weather Blues



During the colder, shorter days of winter, it's common to experience a dip in our mood. Over 1/3 individuals report feeling more down and experiencing increased depression during this time compared to the summer. Being mindful of our lifestyle, particularly in regard to our dietary habits, can actively promote improved mental well-being and bolster our immune system. Let's explore five essential nutrients we should focus on during the winter that can help us beat the cold weather blues.

COMPLEX CARBOHYDRATES like those found in oatmeal, whole grains, nuts, legumes, fruits, and vegetables provide a steady release of energy, promoting serotonin production for mood regulation, and offering dietary fiber to stabilize blood sugar levels and control appetite. These nutrient-rich foods contribute to overall well-being, maintain a healthy immune system, and reduce the risk of winter illnesses.

Boosting your intake of **VITAMIN C** and **ZINC** can strengthen your immune system and support well-being, especially in winter. Vitamin C helps the body fend off seasonal illnesses, which can improve mood by reducing discomfort and fatigue. Zinc supports immune function and may lessen the severity and duration of colds. Include Vitamin C-rich foods like citrus, kiwi, berries, broccoli, pumpkin, sweet potatoes, and spinach, along with Zinc sources like meat, shellfish, dairy, legumes, and nuts.

VITAMIN D is crucial for mood regulation, but reduced sunlight in winter can lead to deficiencies, causing symptoms like fatigue, muscle weakness, and mood changes. Low vitamin D levels are linked to a higher risk of depression and seasonal affective disorder (SAD). While foods like eggs, mushrooms, fatty fish, and fortified milk provide some vitamin D, supplements may be needed for those with limited sun exposure. Consult your healthcare provider to see if supplementation is right for you.

OMEGA 3S & 6 + POLYUNSATURATED FATS - In colder weather, cravings for high-sugar, high-fat "comfort" foods are common, as the body seeks quick energy to stay warm. However, these foods provide only temporary satisfaction, often leading to further cravings. Including healthy fats in your diet can help you feel fuller longer and reduce overeating. Choose Omega-3 fats from oily fish (salmon, mackerel, sardines) and Omega-6 fats from nuts (walnuts), seeds (chia), and olives. These polyunsaturated fats support heart health, healthy cells, skin, and hormone function.

FERMENTED FOODS RICH IN PROBIOTICS are especially beneficial in winter, as they support immune health during colder months. Probiotics strengthen the gut microbiome, crucial for immune function, helping protect against colds and flu. These foods also improve nutrient absorption, ensuring the body effectively uses vitamins and minerals that may be lacking in winter diets. Incorporating fermented foods can boost immune defenses and promote better health during the season.

Getting enough **IRON** is essential for winter nutrition, as it helps combat fatigue and low energy often experienced in colder months. Iron supports hemoglobin, the protein that transports oxygen throughout the body. With reduced sunlight and a higher risk of illness, maintaining sufficient iron helps improve energy levels and immune response, reducing winter weariness.