



CARE CONNECTION

HOW THE CHANGING SEASONS CAN IMPACT YOUR HEALTH

Fall and winter bring a host of fabulous changes — cooler days, fan-favorite sports, the coming of the holiday season, Daylight Saving Time... But transitioning into these seasons can be particularly rough on our bodies. Read on to learn how our bodies react to the changing seasons.

ENERGY LEVELS

If you think you feel more tired in autumn or winter, you're not alone! A study from Harvard Medical School shows that most people sleep roughly 2.7 hours more in October than any other month in the year. Why? It has to do with the adjusted daylight hours and, of course, Daylight Saving Time. During fall and winter, we have fewer hours of daylight, so our eyes don't get exposed to as much sunlight as they do during the summer, which negatively impacts our circadian rhythms and causes deepness of sleep to suffer. The adjusted daylight hours also mess with our natural schedules, which increases stress.



MOOD

Each year, approximately five percent of Americans experience Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), also known as seasonal depression. This condition is linked to the decreased sunlight and shorter days. If you find that mood shifts once autumn rolls around, SAD may be the culprit. In addition, many people experience seasonal anxiety around the holiday season (from November through January) due to added physical, emotional, and financial stress during this time of the year.

BLOOD PRESSURE & RISK FOR HEART ATTACK

Barometric pressure tends to rise in the fall and winter due to storm systems, which can tighten up your blood vessels and increase your blood pressure. In addition, winter brings a higher rate of heart attacks, in part due to higher blood pressure during the season. Rigorous outdoor activities and a compromised immune system (hello cold and flu season!) during the cold winter months can put serious strain on the heart and increase the risk for heart attack.


ACHY JOINTS

If you've woken up with aching joints on a cold morning or if you get achy before a storm, it's because joints are sensitive to barometric pressure, much like blood pressure is. It's especially common for people with arthritis or recent joint injury to feel this sensation during the colder months.

POSITIVE CHANGES

There are plenty of things to love about fall and winter! For example, cooler weather brings benefit to your brain! Memory, temper, and problem-solving all take a hit during the summer heat. Also, some people tend to spend more time outside in autumn and winter, since the temperatures are less oppressive in some areas. Plus, what's a better scene than fall foliage or freshly-fallen winter snow?

Sources: [MeMD](#), [Psychology Today](#), [Shape](#)



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TIPS FOR STAYING HEALTHY OVER THE HOLIDAYS

The holidays are supposed to be times of gratitude, celebration, and togetherness, but amid the stress and planning, we might struggle to keep up our physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. Here are some tips to help you stay healthy over the holiday season.

- Eat well.** It's tempting to bust out the sweets and to indulge (or even to *overindulge*) during Thanksgiving dinner, but you don't want to put on too much holiday weight — after all, research has shown that we don't tend to lose that weight the next year. Know which foods are calorie-high and nutrition-low, like fatty and sugary foods. You don't need to completely deprive yourself of these treats, but be mindful of how much you're snacking. Also, be careful of sneaky liquid calories, like in soda, eggnog, or alcoholic drinks. If you're asked to bring a dish while visiting relatives or to your work's holiday party, try to opt for something healthier (look for healthy twists on holiday favorites) to help everybody to stay on track.
- Stay active.** It may be more difficult to motivate yourself to be active once the weather gets cold and the nights start coming earlier, but autumn and winter offer their own special activities like apple picking or ice skating — and even necessary chores like raking leaves or shoveling snow can help you get your exercise in. During the holiday season when you might feel too busy to properly exercise, take some additional small steps towards staying active, like parking in a further spot at the mall or taking the stairs rather than the elevator when you can.
- Prevent illness and injury.** The changing weather brings cold and flu season. Make sure you keep yourself healthy by washing your hands regularly. When you go outside, make sure you're warm by dressing in layers, and be cautious of ice or slick snow that may cause falls.
- De-stress.** Between travelling, shopping, working, and visiting family and friends, the holidays are stressful. Try to be mindful of the triggers of your stress and determine a plan of action to help you cope with them. Be sure to take care of yourself.



Source: [HuffingtonPost](#), [Greatist](#)

WELLNESS TIP!

Scope out the buffet — and your seat!

Buffets are delicious, but they also tend to lead us to overeating! Scope out the buffet before you fill up your plate. Heavier diners were twice as likely to start picking out food before perusing as thinner eaters, Cornell research showed. Other study-backed ways to eat less in this environment: Sit farther away and in a seat that doesn't face the food.


Sources: [Reader's Digest](#)



DON'T FORGET

LIVEHEALTH ONLINE IS FREE TO TRY THROUGH THE END OF 2018

The FMCP Board of Trustees added LiveHealth Online to the Plan at the beginning of 2018 and made it free to use for the calendar year. If you haven't tried LiveHealth Online yet, give it a shot! This service is especially helpful for diagnosing and treating minor illnesses that occur while travelling or outside your doctor's normal hours. **Don't miss the opportunity to try LiveHealth Online for no charge!**



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YOUR ANNUAL PHYSICAL: HOW IT KEEPS YOU WELL

No matter what stage or season of life you're in, it's important to ensure you get an annual physical and wellness exam done each year. Why? Because your physical and wellness exam serves many functions in ensuring that you stay healthy and well. Here are some reasons why your annual physical is so important.

- **Assessing your overall health.** Your annual physical can help give you a picture of your overall health. Your doctor will evaluate your weight, height, cholesterol, blood pressure, and other vitals to assess your overall condition. Based on these results, your doctor can make recommendations that can help you to improve your wellness.
- **Screening for cancer and other diseases.** Dependent on age and risk factors, your doctor may opt to screen for certain types of cancer or other diseases. This increases your chance of detecting cancer while it's most treatable, in its earliest stages.
- **Updating your medical records.** A lot can change over the course of a year, and your annual physical is the perfect time to update your medical records. Let your doctor know what medications you're currently taking and if you think you've developed any new allergies. Also, be sure to talk about your social and family histories as well as your mental health, since these are all important parts of your medical profile.
- **Maintaining a relationship with your primary care provider.** Your PCP is your go-to person for help or medical advice, so if they're a stranger to you, you may be more reticent to reach out when you need them. Fostering a relationship with your PCP ensures that you get to know each other so that you're both able to care for your wellness.



If you haven't already, make sure you get your annual physical and wellness exam before the year's end!

Source: [Virtua](#)

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

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1-800-810-BLUE
(Provider locator services)
www.anthem.com

Rx Drugs - SavRx

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www.savrx.com

Best Doctors

1-866-904-0910
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Dental - MetLife

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