

Practical tips for a healthier winter

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Credit: Larisa Koshkina/public domain

Many people dread the dark days of winter. Having to spend time indoors can bring on the blues, and close quarters can increase the risk of catching a cold or flu. Dr. Brent Bauer, a Mayo Clinic internal medicine specialist, has tips to help you have a healthier winter.

In winter, you might be tempted to hunker down and wait for it to end. But Dr. Bauer says embracing winter is one of three ways you can make the season healthier and happier.

"I think the No. 1 thing is we still have to stay active," says Dr. Bauer.

If you have the right gear, head outside for a breath of fresh air. Join a gym. Or simply turn up the tunes and dance.

"I think the second thing is we do know that colds and the flu are much higher in the winter months, and that tracks very closely with the humidity level. So as humidity goes down, colds and flus go up," says Dr. Bauer.

He suggests setting your home humidity level at 40% to 50%.

The third thing is vitamin D.

"We get our vitamin D from the sun. Most of us don't get a lot of sun in the winter. So many of us start to see low vitamin D in the winter months, and there are a few studies that suggest low vitamin D may make you more susceptible to colds and flu," says Dr. Bauer.

He does not recommend everyone take vitamin D. But if you're over 50, consider having levels checked. If it's low, your [health care provider](#) may suggest [vitamin](#) D supplements, at least through the [winter](#) months.

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