

# Tips for getting healthy and staying healthy during the cold Winter months

January 26 2022

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Many people think January is a great time to get a fresh start on a new

fitness routine, while others use the cold weather as an excuse to huddle under the covers on the couch. No matter how you approach the new year, the American Heart Association has some important information about how to get healthy—and stay healthy—when the temperatures start to dip.

"There's actually some advantages to working out in [cold weather](#)—with no heat and humidity to deal with you may be able to work out longer in cold weather which means you can burn even more calories. It's also a great way to get much needed vitamin D from the sunlight, which can help elevate your mood," said John A. Osborne, M.D., Ph.D., FACC, FNLA, Founder and Director State of the Heart Cardiology, Metroplex Cardiology.

"Research shows that exercise also boosts your immunity during the cold and flu season, which can be especially important in dealing with possible COVID infection."

Osborne said if you can't exercise outdoors, there are many online resources available to assist in developing a [workout at home](#), or athletes can still visit a gym or even walk the mall if they use the appropriate precautions to protect against COVID.

If you are heading outdoors for exercise, [winter sports](#) like skiing or skating or if you have to shovel your car out of a snow drift, Osborne has some warnings. Aside from some of the well-known cold weather dangers such as frostbite or unsafe driving conditions, there are cardiovascular risks to consider. The cold causes blood vessels to contract and coronary arteries to constrict, which can raise [blood pressure](#), increasing the risk of heart attack and stroke.

"Strenuous activities such as walking through [heavy snow](#) or snow shoveling can add stressors to the heart that people aren't normally used

to," said Osborne "Our hearts also have to work extra hard in cold weather to keep a healthy body temperature."

Here are some tips to keep your [heart](#) in check during coat season:

1. Stay active safely: Make sure you wear layers to keep warm while exercising outdoors to avoid cold weather hazards like hypothermia and frostbite and take breaks. It's important to stay active year-round but make sure you're not overexerting yourself in winter months. When in doubt, ask your doctor. Here are some tips on [how to stay active in cold weather](#).
2. Stay hydrated: Just because it's cold and you may not feel thirsty, it's just as important to drink water like you would during a warm weather workout. Thirst isn't the best indicator that you need to drink, even if you aren't sweating as much you still need to hydrate.
3. Watch out for the added calories in cold weather drinks: Comforting drinks like pumpkin spiced lattes and hot chocolate can be loaded with unwanted sugar and fat.
4. Get vaccinated: COVID-19 and the flu are especially dangerous for people with cardiovascular disease.
5. Learn CPR: EMS response times can be slower with inclement [weather](#). More than 350,000 cardiac arrests happen outside of a hospital each year. If administered immediately after cardiac arrest, CPR can double or triple a person's chance of survival.

Provided by American Heart Association

Citation: Tips for getting healthy and staying healthy during the cold Winter months (2022, January 26) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-01-healthy-cold-winter-months.html>

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