5 COMMON WINTER HEALTH PROBLEMS

ASTHMA ATTACKS
Asthma is one of the most common respiratory illnesses in the United States, and one common trigger becomes more prevalent in winter: freezing temperatures. If you have asthma and intend on spending time outdoors in the elements, cover your nose and mouth with a scarf or face warmer to keep from breathing in the cold, dry air.

CATCHING A VIRUS
According to The National Institutes of Health (NIH), dry winter air allows the flu virus to survive and transmit itself. Also, research suggests that the flu virus’ coating becomes tougher at temperatures close to freezing, making them easier to transmit in the winter.

WEIGHT GAIN
Exercising daily may already be a struggle, and adding another obstacle in the form of cold and unruly weather can really extinguish any motivation. To best combat weight gain, make a conscious effort to get at least 30 minutes of exercise—such as an indoor spin class, or even a yoga class, to outsmart the elements—at least several times per week.

DEPRESSION
The winter blues can have a real effect on people and can cause some seasonal depression. In fact, the ‘winter blues’ are described as a milder version of seasonal affective disorder (SAD). To some extent, these mood changes can be attributed to the decreased sunlight and daylight hours. However, for some people, depression can be triggered because of the loss of a loved one during the holidays or the lack of social engagement that can occur because of bad weather. In order to beat the winter blues, make an effort to get natural sunlight during the day and limit your days spent entirely indoors. Also, be sure that you’re getting proper amount of sleep—about eight hours for most adults.

Source: https://vitalrecord.tamhsc.edu/5-common-winter-health-problems/

SOLUTIONS

- Make sure to make your meals as colorful as possible with a variety of vegetables and lean proteins
- Get out and get moving for at least 30 minutes per day.
- It can feel hard to get up and go in the winter, but finding a friend or partner to do this with you can help you get there and keep your mood lifted.
- Wear a mask outdoors if you struggle with asthma or the air quality is poor.
- It is not too late to get your flu vaccine. Wash your hands regularly, and cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze.
- Stay hydrated and listen to your body when it needs a bit more rest than normal.
CHILDREN’S ORAL HEALTH

WHAT PARENTS & CAREGIVERS CAN DO

CAVITIES ARE ONE OF THE MOST COMMON CHRONIC DISEASES OF CHILDHOOD IN THE UNITED STATES.

Untreated cavities can cause pain and infections that may lead to problems with eating, speaking, playing, and learning. Children who have poor oral health often miss more school and receive lower grades than children who don’t.

- About 1 of 5 (20%) children aged 5 to 11 years have at least one untreated decayed tooth.
- 1 of 7 (13%) adolescents aged 12 to 19 years have at least one untreated decayed tooth.
- Children aged 5 to 19 years from low-income families are twice as likely (25%) to have cavities, compared with children from higher-income households (11%).

Fluoride varnish can prevent about one-third (33%) of cavities in the primary (baby) teeth. Children living in communities with fluoridated tap water have fewer cavities than children whose water is not fluoridated. Similarly, children who brush daily with fluoride toothpaste will have fewer cavities.

Dental sealants can also prevent cavities for many years. Applying dental sealants to the chewing surfaces of the back teeth prevent 80% of cavities.

FOR BABIES WITH NO TEETH

- Wipe gums twice a day with a soft, clean cloth in the morning after the first feeding and right before bed to wipe away bacteria and sugars that can cause cavities.

WHEN TEETH COME IN

- Start brushing twice a day with a soft, small-bristled tooth brush and plain water.
- Visit the dentist by your baby’s first birthday to spot signs of problems early.
- Talk to your dentist or doctor about putting fluoride varnish on your child’s teeth as soon as the first tooth appears.

FOR CHILDREN (2 AND OLDER)

- Brush their teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.
- Drink tap water that contains fluoride.
- Ask your child’s dentist to apply sealants when appropriate.

GOOD DENTAL HEALTH IS IMPORTANT FOR PREGNANT WOMEN

When you’re pregnant, you may be more prone to gum disease and cavities, which can affect your baby’s health. Follow these 3 steps to protect your teeth.

- See a dentist (it’s safe!) before you deliver.
- Brush twice a day.
- Floss daily.

Source: [www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/basics/childrens-oral-health/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/basics/childrens-oral-health/index.html)

The Center for Health and Health Care in Schools reports that 51 million school hours are lost each year due to dental-related issues.
MD LIVE

Getting sick is never convenient and finding time to get to the doctor can be hard. MDLIVE’s telehealth program provides you and your covered dependents access to care for non-emergency medical and needs.

Whether you’re in the city, a rural area or you’re on a weekend camping trip, access to a board-certified MDLIVE doctor is available 24 hours a day/seven days a week. The doctors are licensed to practice medicine in Montana—Montana doctors! You can speak to a doctor immediately or schedule an appointment based on your availability. Telehealth can be a better alternative than going to the emergency room or urgent care.*

MDLIVE doctors can help treat the following conditions and more:

**General Health**
- Allergies
- Asthma
- Joint aches
- Sinus infections

**Pediatric Care**
- Cold/flu
- Ear infections
- Pink eye

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**TELEHEALTH**
**SIMPLE & CONVENIENT CARE WHEN AND WHERE YOU NEED IT**

**WEBSITE**
- Visit the website MDLIVE.com/bcbsmt
- Choose an MDLIVE doctor
- Chat live with the doctor online

**MOBILE APP**
- Download the app from the Apple App Store™, Google Play™ Store or Windows® Store
- Open the app and choose an MDLIVE doctor
- Chat with the doctor from your mobile device

**TELEPHONE**
- Call MDLIVE (888-684-4233)
- Speak with a health service specialist
- Speak with an MDLIVE doctor

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Get connected today!
To register, you’ll need to provide your first and last name, date of birth and MUST member ID.

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*WHY VIRTUAL VISITS?*

- **4 out of 5** smartphone users would like to interact with a healthcare provider via mobile phone.
- **On average, a virtual visit is $44.**
  - $85 less than an in-person PCP visit
  - $250 less than an urgent care visit
  - $950 less than an ER visit
- **Overuse of U.S. emergency departments is responsible for** $38 billion in unnecessary spending **each year.**
SIMPLE EXERCISES TO STRENGTHEN YOUR WRISTS & ANKLES

WRISTS

To strengthen your wrists, try doing each of these exercises two times a week, eight to 12 reps per exercise for a total of one to two sets.

1. **Wrist Curls.** Perform sets of these with both palms facing up and palms facing down to hit all the necessary muscles.

2. **Ball squeeze** using a tennis or lacrosse ball.

3. **Up-Down Plank.** These can also be done on your knees if you are building shoulder strength.

4. **Towel Wring.** Just as it sounds, do the motion of wringing water out of a towel in both directions.

Studies have found that a stronger grip correlates with a lower risk of heart attack and stroke.

ANKLES

Strengthening your ankles requires moves that rely on your balance and subtle flexibility. Start focusing on this crucial area by doing each of these exercises two times a week, eight to 12 reps per exercise for a total of one to two sets. Olympic strength and conditioning coach Christian Bosse further recommends trying these sets without footwear so you will feel the stabilization requirements even more.

1. **Calf Raises** using a wall or chair for added stability

2. **Plantar Flexion**—Gently flex your foot downward so your toes are pointed away from your body. Hold for 15 seconds, bring back to neutral and repeat 10 times each foot.

3. **Ankle Eversion and Inversion**—
   - **Inversion**—Moving only your ankle and keeping your toes pointed up, turn your foot inward, so the sole is facing your other leg. Hold for 15 seconds and bring to neutral.
   - **Eversion**—Moving only your ankle and keeping your toes pointed up, turn your foot outward, away from your other leg. Hold for 15 seconds and bring to neutral.


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