

# Make an Effort To Stay Healthy During the Winter

This summer was unusually hot. In the transition to winter, fall colors have come and gone and we can look forward to familiar crisp, cool sunny days giving way to cold and cloudy days, the seasonal change settling in for winter. Change of seasons is what it's all about.

October ushers in the cloudiest period in Michigan and this lasts through December. The days get shorter and it is common, in mid-December, to get close to nine hours of daylight.

Michigan becomes one of the grayest places in the nation, especially toward the end of the year. Light deprivation has been shown to lead to bad moods, depression, and physical lethargy.

What is the reason for the cloudiness? Lake effect. Cold air comes across the relatively large expanses of warmer water, leading to cloud production. Sault Ste. Marie leads with an average of 209 cloudy days, and it ranks second in the state in annual inches of snowfall at 116 inches, after Marquette at 129.

The farther north you get, the fewer rays of sun you get. The winter blues, winter blahs, call it what you will. People are affected. The more severe, very real affliction is called Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). This condition, caused by a lack of sunlight, is characterized by fatigue, weight gain from continuous hunger, lack of concentration, and varying degrees of depression. Because of the difficulty in quantifying symptoms, many people suffer a mild variant of the syndrome and don't believe they have a problem. Some are so ill that they cannot get out of bed. Full-blown cases are uncommon and two to six percent of the adult population may be affected. Women are three to four times more likely to be affected than men.

Almost everyone is affected negatively by winter. Complaints are most common in the darkest, coldest month of February. Many take trips to



## Maintaining Your Health on Mackinac

By Yvan Silva, M.D.

sunnier, warmer climates. Some go on cruises. But most cannot - it costs too much, or there isn't enough spare time. Practically speaking, there are no lasting effects from these great escapes; the return home is the return to winter's realities. And yet winter can be great. There is a wondrous kind of beauty; people come together more closely, socially and intellectually.

Your body changes in response to the weather and is further challenged by the demands of physical activity, heavier clothing and greater resistance to getting about.

This is the time to work on your program to get the best out of the season. Start with a nutritional tune-up. Increase your resistance to the cold weather and to viral infections. Increase your intake of fresh vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. Ideally, five to seven small servings per day is a recommended routine. A balanced diet is essential and vitamins and other supplements can be beneficial. Avoid excess and empty calories in alcohol, high-fat snacks, and refined sugars. Satisfy your hunger with low-fat items. Watch your weight.

If you're not into regular exercise, this is surely the time to begin a routine. You need to acclimatize your body. It takes a while to build up a good resistance to the cold. Get outside as much as you can. Get off the couch and into the outdoors. Twenty to 30 minutes

per day or more of brisk exercise will help speed up your basic metabolic rate, creating more "core" body heat and burning more calories. Improved circulation, increased cardio-respiratory reserve, better mobility and flexibility, and stronger bone mass are some of the all-important benefits and they will last through all the seasons. And if the weather turns inclement, do some type of exercise indoors.

You can try bringing summer indoors. Keep yourself in a well-lit environment; it has been proven that light itself has a positive effect. Full spectrum lights are recommended instead of blue fluorescent lights. There are expensive, specially designed lights on the market and they're becoming popular. Maintain a steady, moderate indoor temperature, and avoid wide temperature swings. Regular physical exercise is also an excellent antidote to seasonal depression.

Outdoor physical activities, especially with prolonged exposure to cold, and regular physical exercise in cold environments should be undertaken with safety in mind. Hypothermia is always a serious threat, especially when sudden changes in ambient temperature leave you unexpectedly exposed to cold. Hypothermia is the condition where the core body temperature, usually 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit, drops to 96 degrees Fahrenheit or lower, threatening the blood supply of body tissues and limbs; in severe cases it can be life-threatening.

Medical specialists recommend selecting the right materials to layer clothing. The inner layer should be made of porous, non-absorbent materials like polypropylene that wick away moisture from the skin so that perspiration does not cling and chill the body. Cotton clothing should not be worn as an inner layer because it retains moisture that remains on the skin. Fleece or wool makes for a good middle layer. Choose an outer layer that protects against high winds. Do not spend time outdoors in the bitter cold alone. It is important to be with somebody. Symptoms of hypothermia manifest as confusion, trouble speaking, and trouble walking, symptoms more recognizable

by someone else. Frostbite is a serious complication and can progress rapidly. The nose, ears, fingers, and toes are especially vulnerable. If the temperature drops too low or the wind gets too strong, the corneas of the eyes can become vulnerable. Watch out for metallic ornaments - earrings, nose rings, or other wearable metallic body ornaments. Stretching exercises are important and should precede and follow exercise workouts. Muscles are more likely to be cold during exposure.

Remember, you lose fluids and can get dehydrated even though it's a wet environment. Perspiration and sweating occur at a brisk rate and breathing can cause further loss of moisture. If you're outdoors for more than an hour, drink plenty of water or sports drinks. Caffeine is a diuretic that causes fluid loss as well as stress on the cardiovascular system, raising the pulse rate; alcohol causes dilation of blood vessels in the extremities, encouraging heat and fluid loss.

It is important to know your limits. Shoveling snow is definitely out of the question if you have heart disease, or if you're not in excellent physical condition. Cold air can trigger lung problems in people who suffer from asthma, and even in some who don't. Wearing a mask or scarf to warm the air you breathe is a good idea. Persistent cough or

shortness of breath after exercising is best sorted out by your doctor. Remember, the maximum heat loss from the body during exposure to the cold occurs from the head. The right headgear is important.

Physical exercise, while very important within the activities of daily living, doesn't have to be undertaken in extremely cold conditions. There are always alternatives, the shopping mall, the gymnasium, and even at home, where you can choose alternatives to your routine that require similar output.

Lower your stress. Don't take on too much, too many projects, or too many commitments; the holiday season is notorious for the "holiday blues," feelings of depression indicative of SAD. If your mental state begins to compromise your personal or professional life and your daily activities, it might be a good idea to see your doctor.

Plan your family and group activities throughout the winter, spaced out in a timely manner. Get a hobby. Life is different in the winter. It need not be any more difficult. Start to winterize your body now. Tune up your mind as well.

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## Mackinac Island Churches Schedule Winter Activities

Following is a list of activities planned by Island churches.

### Ste. Anne's Church

A joint service will take place with Trinity Episcopal Church on Sunday, December 11, at 11 a.m. at Ste. Anne's.

After 11 a.m. mass Sunday, December 18, a tree trimming event will take place preparing the church for the holiday season. A potluck lunch will follow the decorating activities.

The church also is holding a Toys for Tots new toy drive and is accepting donations until December 15. New toys can be dropped off in the basement of Ste. Anne's or on the front porch of the rectory.

The church will be conducting a nonperishable food drive all winter in support of the Meals on Snowmobiles for Island seniors. The program provides two hot meals a week for approximately 25 people throughout the winter. Food for the program can be dropped off in the basement of Ste. Anne's or on the front porch of the rectory. Mackinac Island Community Foundation provides funding and Ste. Anne's

Church's kitchen facility is used for meal preparation. Volunteers deliver and make the meals.

Saturday, December 24 there will be a Christmas Eve mass at 8 p.m.

Sunday, December 25 a Christmas Day mass will be held at 11 a.m.

Sunday, January 1, a New Year's Day mass will begin at 11 a.m.

### Trinity Episcopal Church

A Christmas Eve program of lessons and carols will begin at 3 p.m.

Beginning in January, the church will offer a course on Michael Johnston's book, "Engaging the Word," with meeting times to be announced on Channel 3. The course and group discussions will be led by the Reverend Anita Wingert and a potluck dinner will take place after each meeting.

Books will be available at the Parish Hall.

### Mackinac Island Bible Church

Church service will take place through April every Sunday at 9:30 a.m. in Johnson Hall at Mission Point Resort.

A Women's Christmas Tea will be December 19, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. at Johnson Hall.

In January, a Kids Club with games and stories will be offered to students in first grade through eighth grade each Wednesday after school.

What better thought to send you...



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to you and yours.



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