

Tune Up Your Mind and Body To Prepare for Winter Activities

The weather this summer has been wonderful. We had a Mackinac mix of sunshine, warm rain, and invigorating breezes. Last winter was, for this area, relatively mild – a short lake freeze and not enough snow. The phenomenon of global warming continues to prevail in scientific and public discussions. In the usual transition to winter, fall colors are just beginning to manifest. We can look forward to crisp, cooler, sunny days giving way to cold and cloudy days, the seasonal change as we settle in for winter.

October starts to usher in the cloudiest period in Michigan. The days get shorter, and it's common, by mid-December, to get close to nine hours of daylight. Michigan becomes one of the grayest places in this part of the nation, especially towards the end of the year and through the winter. Light deprivation has several effects on the body, and is known to lead to bad moods, depression, and physical lethargy.

Lake effect is cited as the reason for the increasing cloudiness. Cold air comes across the relatively large expanses of warmer water in the lakes, enhancing cloud production. The farther north you get, the fewer rays of sun you get. This can lead to the winter blues. Some people do get affected. The more severe, very real affection is called Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). This condition, caused by a lack of sunlight, is characterized by fatigue, weight gain from continuing hunger, lack of concentration, and varying degrees of depression. Many people suffer



Maintaining Your Health on Mackinac

By Yvan Silva, M.D.

a mild variant of the syndrome, and don't believe they have a problem because of the difficulty in quantifying symptoms. A few can feel so ill that they cannot get out of bed. Full-blown cases are uncommon; it is estimated that 2% to 6% 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, if you listen to hear folks talk. Complaints are most common in the darkest, coldest month of February. Some take trips to sunnier, warmer climates. Some go on cruises. This type of vacation break is excellent, offering a nice change that can be helpful in dealing with the stress of daily living. But many cannot take a break because it costs too much, there is work to do, and 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.

For so many, winter is a great time of year. People come together more closely, socially and intellectually. There is more time for indoor activities, hob-

bies, and cooperative projects. Your body changes in response to the weather and is further challenged by the demands of physical activity in the colder environment – 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; vitamin 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 start. 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 important benefits, and they will last through all the seasons. When 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 are becoming popular. Maintain a steady, moderate indoor temperature, and avoid wide temperature swings. Regular physical exercise is also an excellent antidote to seasonal winter depression.

This is as good a time as any to review what we can do to maintain good physical conditioning during the winter season. Outdoor physical activities, especially with expected or unexpected 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 healthy viability of body tissues and limbs, and in severe cases, it can be life-threatening.

Medical specialists recommend that you select the right materials to layer your clothing. The inner layer should be made of porous, non-absorbent materials like polypropylene that wick away moisture from the skin so that perspiration doesn't 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 walking – symptoms often more easily recognizable by a companion. 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. Stretching exercises are very

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 in 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 are not in excellent physical condition. Cold air can trigger lung problems in people who suffer from asthma, and even in some who do not. 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 always important.

Physical exercise, while very important within the activities of daily living, does not have to be undertaken in extremely cold conditions. There are always alternatives – the shopping mall, the gym, and even at home, where you can choose alternatives to your routine that require the same or 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 Seasonal Affective Disorder. 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.


Finally, plan family and group activities throughout the winter. 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.

Dr. Silva is a professor of surgery at Wayne State University and a resident of Woodbluff on Mackinac Island.

Island Veterans Attend Service for Fallen Soldier

Paul Wandrie, Louis Bunker, Rod Horn, Donald Andress, and Pete Komblevitz of Mackinac Island's American Legion Post 299 attended a military funeral Thursday, October 4, in Cheboygan for an active duty soldier who was killed September 23 in Afghanistan.

Sergeant First Class Matthew Blaskowski, 27, was from Hebron Township near Levering and was graduated from Cheboygan High School. He was a member of the U.S. Army 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment (Airborne), 173rd Airborne Brigade, stationed in Vicenza, Italy.

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 A Salad for the Chef \$9.75 Crisp field greens, sweet peppers, ripe tomato, double-smoked bacon, roasted turkey, bleu cheese and caramelized walnuts tossed in a creamy garlic dressing
 Sandwiches
 BLT & G \$8.75 Thick caramelized bacon, crisp lettuce, ripe tomato, smoked gouda cheese and mayonnaise on grilled sourdough bread
 Chicken Mackinac \$9.75 Char-grilled chicken breast, double-smoked bacon, mushrooms, onions and Gruyère Swiss cheese on a fresh kaiser roll
 Oriental Tuna Steak Sandwich \$10.75 Sesame-teriyaki glazed Ahi tuna, char-grilled to medium rare, sweet pepper relish and red pepper-basil sauce on a flaky Kaiser roll
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