

# Cold Weather, Warm Smiles

**W**inter may be darker and colder than the rest of the year, but we shouldn't let the season determine how we feel—either physically or mentally. The winter months offer a new opportunity to expand our interests, and we should take advantage of every chance to make the most of each day.

The trick is that we have to be more vigilant during this time of year. In the summer months, it is easy to spend hours outside working in the garden, playing with children, and enjoying fresh fruits and vegetables. During the winter months, it is easy to let the cold air drive us inside where it's cozy and comfortable.

To resist the urge to “hibernate”, we need to focus on three key goals:

1. Maintaining our energy;
2. Reducing our stress; and
3. Preserving our general health

Use the following tips to turn the approaching cold season into one that keeps you wonderfully warm.

- ❖ **Make the most of natural daylight**—Get outside for at least 20 minutes each day for some exercise. Consider going for a walk, raking leaves, finishing garden work, shoveling your driveway, snow-shoeing, or simply playing in the snow. Don't forget sun block, and be sure you check with your doctor before attempting strenuous activities.
- ❖ **Seek the light**—If you can't get outside, sit near a window and keep your work place and home well lit. Consider buying a “therapy light” if you suffer from conditions such as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).
- ❖ **Create your own heat**—It's simple...just keep moving and your body will do the rest. Consider taking up a winter sport like ice skating, winter hiking, or skiing. You should also keep up your indoor exercise routine at a gym, indoor pool, or your home.
- ❖ **Make breakfast your first priority**—Regardless of how late you think you are, breakfast remains

the most important meal of the day. Enjoy a slow-release carbohydrate food, such as oatmeal, muesli with fruit, whole wheat toast. Other great choices include egg whites and bran flakes.

- ❖ **Increase fiber and protein**—Make a double batch of chili, soup, stew, or casserole with beans, lean meats and vegetables. Put the spare batch in your freezer so you have it on hand during times when you are rushed. Other great high-fiber foods include: raspberries, pears, apples, blueberries, strawberries, bananas, oranges, broccoli and more.
- ❖ **Snack smart**—Avoid candy bars, sodas, and other unhealthy, sugary snacks. Instead, reach for air-popped popcorn, carrots, sunflower seeds, almonds, pistachios, and raisins.
- ❖ **Five-a-day**—Try to eat five smaller meals throughout the day. Each meal should focus on complex carbohydrates and protein, such as lean cuts of meat, low-fat cheeses, yogurt, fruits and vegetables.
- ❖ **Don't forget to drink**—Remember, if you are thirsty, you are already dehydrated. Drink more water and green tea, and limit your intake of coffee and soda.
- ❖ **Wash your hands**—use soap and clean running water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- ❖ **Stay warm and dry**—Dress in layers with sweaters, coats, hats, scarves, and mittens or gloves.
- ❖ **Keep stress in check**—Do not overload your schedule or bills this year. Stay within your budget, take on only what you know you can accomplish, and ask for help from family or friends when needed.
- ❖ **Take five**—Allow yourself five minutes of quality relaxation each day. Sit straight, with your shoulders down, head up, eyes closed, and take deep breaths.
- ❖ **Sleep well**—Go to bed and wake at roughly the same time each day so your body does not become too confused, which may lead to insomnia or restless sleep. ☺