

TEN TIPS FOR COLD WEATHER

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1. *Keep your ears and neck warm and dry*

Cold, windy weather rapidly cools the skin. Parts of the head that project outwards, like the ears and nose, have more exposure and cool more rapidly. This can lead to frostbite if exposure is prolonged. If the body is rapidly cooled, the immune system can be temporarily affected and make an individual more susceptible to viruses and secondary bacterial infections. The cooling effect is intensified if the skin or hair is wet. The nose bears the brunt of warming and humidifying inhaled air and has to work overtime when exposed to cold dry outside air. Our protection by way of the moist mucus coating of the nasal lining can be literally dried away in seconds. Nasal congestion and increased mucus is not only normal when we go outside, it is a necessary part of our protective barrier. Be careful about using decongestants (like Sudafed™ or Afrin™ nasal spray) since these will impair these protective responses.

2. *Wetter is better*

The dryness of winter air outside and inside pulls moisture right out of our bodies through the nose and skin. We need more fluid to make up for the increased loss, which can be intensified by rapid breathing through the mouth when we exercise by running, skiing and sledding. Salt water nasal sprays can also help.

3. *Don't forget the chicken soup*

Chicken soup is nutritious and has nutrients to keep the immune system primed as well as helping to keep the body warm. Other drinks, like hot chocolate, additionally provide not only warmth but carbohydrates for energy.

4. *Sugar for the nose*

Once a virus infects the nose, it is not unusual to develop a bacterial infection because of the damage the virus causes. This can lead to sinusitis, sore throat, cough and even pneumonia. Using a nasal spray containing xylitol, a kind of sugar different from cane sugar, can help. This substance is sweet but also has the ability to prevent many kinds of bacteria from attaching to the lining of the nose, reducing the chance of a bacterial infection. It is available as an over-the-counter nasal spray.

5. *Give your nose a shower*

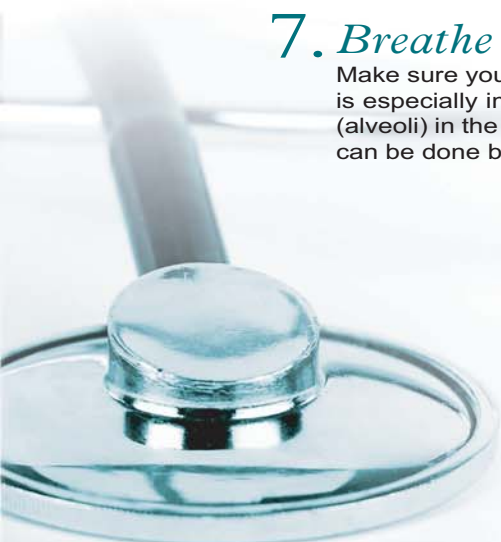
When the outside air is particularly cold and dry, even young people can develop crusting of the lining of the nose. This occurs when the ultrathin layer of mucus protecting the cells of our nasal lining loses its water molecules and is replaced with a dry, crusted surface. The lack of mucus flow allows bacteria to grow and cause localized infection and bleeding. If this happens, the best way to remove the crusts is not by picking the nose, but by irrigation. There are specially mixed solutions, such as Sinus Rinse™, Salt Aire Spray™, and ENT Sol, which provide a gentle jet of salt water to delicately dislodge and wash away the crusts and bacteria.

6. *If I gargle with mouthwash, will it help keep me from getting a sore throat?*

In general mouthwash does not prevent sore throats. Any antibacterial activity is brief and bacterial counts come back up after only a few minutes. Additionally, when bacteria are killed, there is loss of "good" bacteria as well, which serve to suppress the presence of more serious kinds. If you want to use a mouthwash, use a xylitol containing mouthwash, like Biotene™, to keep the bad bacteria from clinging to the lining of the throat. While Vitamin C is important for immune function, taking excessive amounts won't give you additional benefit. The best thing to do is what has already been mentioned: keep yourself well hydrated, eat a nutritious diet and stay warm.

7. *Breathe deeply the breath of life*

Make sure you expand your lungs fully at least five times during the day. If you lead a sedentary lifestyle, this is especially important. When the lungs do not fully inflate, there is the chance that many of the tiny air sacs (alveoli) in the lungs will collapse, leading to inflammation of the lung tissue (atelectasis). Breathing exercises can be done by anybody of any age, at any time and in any place.





8. *Liquid cheer and the holidays*

Wine, beer and liquor flow abundantly during the holidays. But be careful. Too much can make it more likely that you'll contract a cold. That's because alcohol in the tissues decreases our immune protection. Additionally, we tend to forget how cold the outside air is and neglect to bundle up to keep warm. Alcohol dilates the blood vessels in the skin so that we radiate away more of our body heat at a faster rate. This chilling effect also diminishes local immune defenses in the nose and throat.

9. *Winter Nose Bleeds*

The drying effect of cold weather on the nose often leads to nose bleeding. This can be a minor medical emergency, but in especially the elderly, the bleeding can arise from larger arteries found in the rear portion of the nose. The bleeding can be intense and life threatening, often requiring hospitalization and surgery. The bleeding tendency can be worsened because of the widespread use of aspirin and other medicines. To help prevent nose bleeds, make sure the nose is moist and that crusts don't develop. Using a nasal wetting agent, such as Rhinaris™ gel and mist, will help forestall a serious medical event.

10. *Pipe down!*

Protect and save your voice during the winter holiday season. We get tempted to party long and hard, and often have to shout to be heard over the music commonly experienced at parties. Also, once we have a drink or two, we don't realize how hard we are driving our vocal organ. We wake up the next day hoarse and sore. Remember to drink lots of liquids if this happens. The vocal cords, like the nose, need a significant amount of mucus to lubricate their surfaces. Then rest the voice as much as possible for a few days to allow the tissue swelling to resolve. Be kind to your pipes!

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