

Six Secrets to Staying Healthy This Winter

Contributed by Susan Biali
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I've recently been asked to be part of a wonderful new project, an exciting new Canadian national magazine that will be one of a kind in its market. I'll tell you more when the first issue comes out, in May 2008, but for now I thought you might benefit from my research for one of their articles, which I just submitted. We've just gotten into the thick of cold and flu season, so here are some tips that will make a huge difference towards keeping you healthy.

Six Secrets to Staying Healthy This Winter:

- Get enough sleep – which means at least 7 hours a night. Not getting enough sleep, whether it's staying up all night one night, or just not getting enough sleep several days in a row, puts a serious damper on your immune system's ability to fight off infection.

- Eat well – make sure to get three solid meals in every day, which means each meal should contain a carbohydrate, a protein source, and a fruit or vegetable. Avoid sugary foods and drinks, as sugar has been shown to literally slow your immune cells down.

- Exercise regularly. Exercise, even just going for a walk, pumps your circulation, and boosts your immune function. Just don't go all out your first time, or just once a week, as your body actually perceives this as a stress, which can actually weaken your immune system.

- Wash your hands – whenever you can (without being obsessive, of course!). Especially do this before eating. Be careful throughout the day, not to touch your mouth or nose with your hands, as this is how bugs (e.g. viruses and bacteria) get into your body.

- Have fun – Laughter and positive social interaction are both great for your immune system. Spend time this holiday season with people you love and people that make you laugh. Take part in things that make you feel like a kid – make silly Christmas cookies (a friend and I did this once, we made gingerbread men and women that looked like our friends and were laughing so hard we could barely squeeze the icing on), try ice skating at the outdoor rink, anything that helps you forget about the stresses of the day and the season.

- See your doctor if that cold isn't going away - I usually don't like to prescribe anything for colds, as rest and healthy fluids and foods are usually better than any medicine. But if it's been a few days and you're just not getting better, or you're coughing up green phlegm, or you've had a steady fever, or your whole body has felt tired and achy for more than a few days, get in to see a doctor before your situation becomes more chronic and may be harder to treat.

I hope that helps! No one likes to get sick, and you're really not helpless among the coughing, sneezing masses – just because they're all around you, doesn't mean at all that you're doomed to it, too. Look after yourself this season, and have a great one!

Susan Biali