# Winter wellness

Winter is approaching, with the days becoming shorter and colder. The temptation to hibernate may be appealing, so here are some tips about how to stay healthy and happy during winter time.

**Keep protected against ‘flu and Covid.**

Viruses are more prevalent in the winter time and spread more easily as people spend more time indoors.

Everyone over 50 who does not have a long term medical condition can now book an appointment for a free ‘flu jab. If you have been contacted about you Covid vaccination please get vaccinated. At The Old School Surgery the next ‘flu and Covid vaccination clinic is on Saturday 5th November.

**Keep eating well**

Vitamins and minerals have a vital role in keeping your immune system on fighting form through the winter months. Eat the rainbow:

* Orange and yellow produce such as squash and pumpkin provide vitamin A.
* Dark green vegetables including kale, chard, spinach, rocket, brussels sprouts and sprouting broccoli are a good source of B vitamins, as well as vitamins C, E and K, iron, calcium and folate.
* Sustainable, plant-based sources of protein like beans and pulses are packed with gut-friendly fibre and so important of our immune response.
* Omega-3 fats, which you can find in oily fish and algae-based supplements, are also key for immune function, as well as mental health.
* Make root vegetables, which are high in potassium, into tasty, warm stews.
* Take a vitamin D supplement. You get no vitamin D from sunshine during winter. Boost your level and keep your bones, muscles and brain from feeling achy and tired.

**Keep warm**

Older people and children under 5 are more vulnerable to the cold. Many of us are worried about keeping warm this winter. If possible, aim to keep your home between 18C and 21C (64F and 70F degrees) and wear your winter woollies and jumpers if you are not already. Hot drinks and food will give you a warming sensation and tea especially is full of antioxidants which are beneficial in preventing premature ageing and cancer.

**Keep active**

Continue to do the activities you enjoy. Get out in the garden, wrap up warm and go for a walk, exercise and socialise. Parkrun on Marlborough Common on Saturday morning in the wind and rain is no fun, but warming up afterwards with a cup of coffee and a chat with friends is fun. If you are less mobile you could try chair based exercise, like chair yoga.

**Don’t get SAD**

Lack of daylight can have a big impact on mood during the winter with many of us experiencing the winter blues and around 3% developing **Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).** The brain produces less serotonin without sunlight, which can cause depression, and less sunlight can also increase melatonin, which can cause feelings of sleepiness. So try to get as much natural light as possible. A walk, preferably at midday or, if you are less mobile, sit by the window. Some people find it helps to use a light box or lamp which gives off a strong white or blue light. Exposing yourself to natural light will also support your body’s natural circadian rhythms and help you have a better night’s sleep - crucial for mood and immune health. Eating well, keeping warm and active will also help to beat the winter blues and SAD.

Keep healthy, happy and warm and enjoy wintertime.

Best wishes,

Dr Angela Paddon and the team at The Old School Surgery.