

## 5 Tips for Staying Healthy This Winter

This is a busy time of the year. But in the hustle and bustle of work, family, and holidays, don't forget to pay attention to your health. As we face shorter days and colder weather it's important to maintain healthy habits and there are several, easy steps you can take to keep you and your family in tip-top condition. Here are five ways to stay healthy during cold weather:

**1. Watch what you eat.** During this season family get-togethers and holiday parties make it all too easy to over indulge. The Heart Foundation suggests that "[w]inter is a great time to re-think the size of your meal, especially with foods such as rice, pasta and potatoes which, while delicious, can be easy to over-serve. Choosing a healthy amount for you can help to manage your weight,

and free up space on your plate for more vegetables! Try using smaller plates when dishing up and waiting 20 minutes before heading back for seconds."

But it's not just about denial. Treat yourself to in-season fruits and vegetables like grapefruit, carrots, oranges and cauliflower which are fresh, abundant, and cheaper than at other times of the year. (They are delicious, too.)

**2. Get outta here.** "Always check your weather app before [going outside] for the day and dress accordingly" recommends the University of Nebraska Health Center. "Make sure you have a warm coat, hat, gloves and earmuffs handy for inclement weather". Even in frigid weather once you get moving you'll warm up. When you're out and about look for ways to sneak in a little more exercise by parking at the far end of the supermarket lot and walking to the entrance or by opting for the stairs instead of an elevator.

**3. Sit less.** If the weather gets so bad it forces you to stay inside, get active and have fun around the house. "Don't want to miss your favorite show?" the Heart Foundation asks. "Try jogging or skipping on the spot or even just stretching while you watch. Use an activity tracker to make sure you're still getting your steps up. Set a target to achieve the same amount of steps you would complete over the warmer months."



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There are many ways to get active indoors, the Foundation advises. "Join a team or a physical activity program. There are lots of indoor activities to embrace over winter, such as yoga, bowling, dancing, soccer, and so on. The key is making your winter activity enjoyable and social. Try out your local indoor swimming pool; if you're not a great swimmer try some simple aerobics moves in the shallow end."

**4. Give your immune system and mental health a boost.** Because of reduced sunlight hours, the short cold days of winter may be robbing you of vitamin D. Vitamin D increases your body's resistance to certain diseases. It strengthens your bones and teeth. Plus, *healthline.com* reports that "[r]esearch has shown that vitamin D might play an important role in regulating mood and decreasing the risk of depression." Load up on vitamin D by eating foods high in the vitamin like eggs, mushrooms, and fortified milk and by taking walks in the sunshine. If your doctor recommends it

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Winter Health Tips...cont.

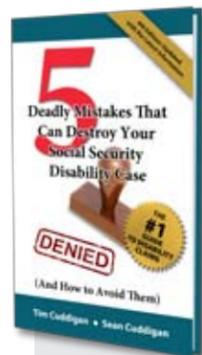
you may wish to take a daily vitamin D supplement.

**5. Get vaccinated.** While we are all getting a bit weary of advice about vaccinations, it still bears repeating. *AARP Magazine* relates that “what’s important is to start taking the precautions you need today to reduce your risk of getting a cold, the flu and COVID, and make it through the winter healthy and safe.” As much as we would like it to go away, COVID is still with us. The National Institute of Health predicts that “[a]s colder temperatures settle in and people spend more time gathered indoors, cases of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses almost certainly will rise.” The American Medical Association recommends getting vaccinated and boosted for COVID and notes that “unvaccinated adults 50–64 years old were 7.4 times more likely to be hospitalized from COVID-19.”

### “The flu will be returning with a vengeance”

Last winter due to widespread use of masks during the pandemic, the number of influenza cases was down dramatically, but medical experts are predicting that this winter with masking all but gone the flu will be returning with a vengeance. The U.S. Health and Human Services Department says, “Every year, millions of people get the flu. The good news is that the seasonal flu vaccine can

lower the risk of getting the flu by about half.



“5 Deadly Mistakes That Can Destroy Your Social Security Disability Case” is the #1 guide to improving the odds of winning a disability case.

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## VA Hiring Thousands of New Employees to Assist Veterans Seeking PACT Act Benefits

The Veterans Affairs Department is on hiring binge. The VA wants to bring on board more than 2,000 new employees as it implements the recently passed PACT Act legislation.

The PACT Act dramatically expands VA health care and benefits for veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances. The VA estimates that the PACT Act extends benefits to an estimated 5 million veterans. Already more than 150,000 veterans have filed claims under the provisions of the Act so hiring is currently underway to add more claims processors.

If you served during the Gulf War, post 9/11 or Vietnam War eras and are dealing with a serious health issue which you believe was caused by exposure to toxic materials, you will want to get your [free](#) copy of our book *Expanding Your VA Benefits: The Veteran's Complete Guidebook for the PACT Act*. You can download this [free](#) comprehensive guide to your rights and benefits under the PACT Act from our website, [cuddiganlaw.com](http://cuddiganlaw.com).



## Comfort Food

From the kitchen of Janet Cuddigan

### Gingerbread Latte

For these cold winter months, you’re sure to enjoy this warm and cozy drink. The blend of ginger, cinnamon, and nutmeg spice up this recipe and make it a welcome change from your everyday coffee.

And it’s easy to make, too

½ cup milk  
½ cup water  
1 tablespoon white sugar  
1 tablespoon instant coffee  
1 pinch ground ginger  
1 pinch ground cinnamon  
1 pinch ground cloves  
1 pinch ground nutmeg  
1 tablespoon whipped cream, or more to taste

Whisk milk, water, sugar, coffee, ginger, cinnamon, cloves, and nutmeg together in a microwave-safe bowl. Heat in the microwave until warmed, about 2 minutes. Pour latte into a mug; top with whipped cream.

Adapted from [allrecipes.com](http://allrecipes.com)

## Social Security Struggles to Provide Customer Service After Offices Reopen



In 2020 Social Security closed all of its more than 1,200 field offices due to the pandemic. The field offices reopened in April, but Social Security is still struggling to properly serve the American people and to return to pre-pandemic levels of service. Data the Social Security Administration recently provided to Congress shows that nearly 20% of the field offices have had 40 or more customers in line on multiple days. There have been reports that people have slept in line outdoors all night at some field offices to get a favorable place in line the next morning.

This is especially troublesome for our most at-risk population—the disabled. Although the lengthy office closures caused applications for disability benefits to plummet (the data shows that SSDI awards to workers who became disabled fell 15% last year which is addition an 11% drop in 2020), the average wait time to process initial disability decisions now stands at an all-time high of 198 days.

Social Security says they have been struggling due to staffing shortages and insufficient budgets. Acknowledging “delays in service and long waits for disability decisions,” the Social Security Administration has asked for an extra \$800 million in funding. The plunge in service has caught the attention of Congress. Senator Susan Collins (R-Me) has pressed the SSA to provide details about when the agency will return to pre-pandemic levels of staffing and numbers of customers served. She also asked for details of how Social Security will improve its customer service. Only time will tell whether the attention from Congress and the additional money (if they get it) will bolster Social Security’s customer service.



### Brain Teaser

### Time Machine Puzzler:

The most recent year with no repeated digits is 2013.

What was the most recent year before 2013 that had no repeated digits?



For the solution go to [cuddiganlaw.com/library/newsletter](http://cuddiganlaw.com/library/newsletter)

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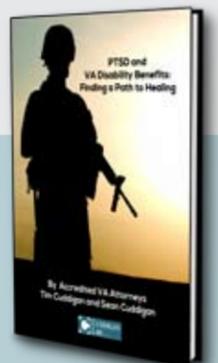


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