

Tips for Staying Healthy Through the Winter

By Gord Sleivert, Vice President Sport Performance, Canadian Sport Centre Pacific

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Ten Strategies for Staying Healthy and Enhancing Performance This Winter

In the cold dark Canadian winter it can be a challenge to stay healthy, especially during high volume training which can beat down immunity. Nevertheless, staying healthy is an important foundation for improvement over this winter season. Here are ten simple tips to help you stay healthy, train hard and improve your performance.

1. **Vaccination:** See a physician and get a flu shot. This can help provide immunity against the major strains of influenza emerging this flu season. Also be sure that you are up to date on chicken pox, meningitis and other basic vaccines. Be aware of screening blood work for early identification of anemia, mono and other illnesses.

2. **Hygiene:** Wash your hands or use hand sanitizers regularly. Use hand sanitizers before eating and when in public places, most importantly use on a regular basis. Keep your room, apartment or house clean so there is less chance of infection. Avoid those who are sick and if you have a cold try to limit your own exposure to others. Most importantly, do not share water bottles!

3. **Recovery:** After workout replenish carbohydrate, protein and fluid. A sport bar (e.g. Cliff Bar, Elev8me, Powerbar) and water is convenient. Carbohydrates are particularly important for immunity. Talk to a dietician for more advice. Make sure you wash your hands before eating because immediately after workout there is a small period of reduced immunity. If you have an injury, illness or mood problems, be sure to seek help early before it spirals out of control.

4. **Sleep:** Get 10 hours of sleep every night. Sleep experts suggest that this is ideal for training athletes. Make sure your sleep environment is optimal: very dark, quiet, and comfortable. Sleep deprivation reduces the number of natural killer cells created by our bodies to fight off invaders, leaving us vulnerable to colds and flus.

5. **Nap:** A 30-45 minute nap in the afternoon or between training sessions is restorative both physically and mentally. It allows you to focus, train harder and boost your immunity. After a nap you will be better able to concentrate on the technical side of training. Believe it or not, getting enough sleep reduces your cravings for junk food and can help manage body composition.

6. **Sunshine:** Train in Hawaii or Florida! If you can't get there then ensure that between October and March you are supplementing with Vitamin D – the Sunshine Vitamin, which can boost immunity and has many other beneficial effects. From October to March, when Canada does not get UVB rays, the recommended dosage is 1000 IU per day. The following brands sell vitamin D supplements in a 400IU and 1000IU dose: Natural Factors, Jamieson and Swiss.

7. **Eat Well:** Make a weekly shopping list with the basics including vegetables and fruit, high fiber cereal, wild rice, whole wheat bread and multigrain pasta, dairy, lean meat, fish, poultry, eggs, beans and nuts. Add items that you will need to make the meals and snacks for the week. Look at your schedule and make a menu. On days when you do not have time to cook, plan to use leftovers or portable meals that you can make ahead of time. Supplement your diet with a brand you can trust. INFINIT and INTERACTIV are two brands that have undergone rigorous testing for banned substances

8. **Dress for Success:** Stay warm and dry after a workout to reduce your chances of catching a cold or flu. Staying in damp clothing for even a short period of time can translate to reduced immune function.

9. **Reduce your stress:** Mental stress often manifests itself physically, reducing immunity and leading to sickness. Manage your stress by being organized, saying no to extra things when life and training is busy, and using some pro-active strategies like meditation, yoga or other relaxation methods.

10. **Be Happy:** Have fun and enjoy your training, your teammates and your life. Be sure to balance daily demands with recreation and free time to unwind. Research has shown that happy people are healthy people and it is no different for athletes.

For more information on staying healthy and enhancing performance through the winter, please contact [Meagan Ponton](#)



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