

GENERAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

TOPIC 4:

WINTER WELLBEING

INTRODUCTION

As the weather becomes colder and there is less exposure to sunlight, the winter months are a common time to feel run-down and pick up viral illnesses.

Here are some tips to enable you to stay in top condition!

HANDWASHING & HAND GEL

- Ensure you wash your hands with warm water and soap before you eat and after you have trained.
- Alcohol handgel is a useful alternative if this is not easily available. You can purchase mini-bottles to carry in your coat or bag.
- Try not to touch your face / rub eyes / pick your nose (!) when you are training as infectious bugs (e.g. viruses and bacteria) can come into contact with your upper respiratory tract.
- In large gatherings, consider using Vicks 'First Defence' spray to coat your airways and make you less likely to pick up illness.
- If you are in heavy training blocks, you will be at greater risk of illness. Ensure you get good amount of sleep and limit how much you interact with people (within reason).

NUTRITION

- Stay well hydrated.
- Eat a balanced diet:

- a. *Anti-oxidants* – As a guide, at least 5 pieces of 'fruit and veg' in a day (7 pieces if you become unwell). These need to be varied- use the "colours of the rainbow" as a guide.
- b. *Milk*- This helps with anti-oxidant capacity. Drinking a pint within 30 mins of a training session is helpful. This advice does not apply to people who are lactose-intolerant and cannot drink milk or dairy products.
- c. *Red meat* – Try and get it in 4 times a week for the iron. Lack of iron can make you feel tired and weaken your immune system.
- d. *Seeds & nuts* – These are good sources of selenium, which is necessary for immune function.
- e. *Omega 3* – Oily fish 4 times a week. E.g. salmon, mackerel, tuna (Tinned fish is fine).
- f. *Probiotics* – Yakult / Actimel drinks are good for you as research has shown they may reduce the amount of colds you get.
- g. Reduce the *processed foods* you eat – These are high in sugar and fats and increase stress on your immune system.

FLU VACCINATION

- During the winter months, consider getting an influenza vaccination ('flu jab') to prevent against the complications of influenza (the flu), especially if you have longstanding illness such as asthma or diabetes.
- These flu jabs are usually available from your GP or selected pharmacists November to January every year.
- Although symptoms of colds and flu can be similar, the two are different.
- Colds are usually distinguished by a blocked or runny nose and sneezing. Other symptoms include coughing, sore throat, and watery eyes. No specific vaccine against colds currently exists because many types of viruses can cause them.

- In contrast, Flu comes on suddenly, is more serious, and lasts longer than colds.
- Flu symptoms include fever, headache, chills, dry cough, body aches, fatigue, and general misery. Like colds, flu can cause a stuffy or runny nose, sneezing, and watery eyes.

Key phrases: Handwashing, Handgel, Anti-oxidants, Hydration, Influenza jab.

(Acknowledgement and thanks to Dr K. Strachan for part of content.)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

VIDEO-

COLD OR FLU?

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/winterhealth/Pages/Fluandthefluvaccine.aspx>