



Better Safe!



WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR FAMILY'S SAFETY

When **The Cold** Gives You More Than **The Chills**

DEALING WITH WINTER WEATHER

Bright blue skies, blankets of snow, crisp days and cozy nights by a crackling fire. For many people, winter is a welcome time of year. But for people with certain diseases like arthritis, it can be a pain—literally. While cold weather doesn't cause arthritis or most other conditions that get worse when temperatures drop, it can cause problems for people who have them. If you've got one of these conditions, here's what you need to know to survive winter's chill.

Weathering The Weather

"Weather affects different people differently," Dr. Mark Gourley of the National Institutes of Health says. "Some people actually prefer cold weather, but many people with rheumatoid arthritis or lupus will be stiffer in the morning. It can take them longer to get up and loosen their joints and get going."

There's very little research showing that cold weather directly causes arthritis or alters its course. So why does the cold seem to make arthritis feel worse?

As the weather changes, so can the pressure in your joints. If you think of the tissues surrounding the joint as a balloon, Gourley explains, the balloon around the joint will expand a little when air pressure is low. The expanding tissues put pressure on the joint. People can actually feel changes in air pressure in their joints, which is why some people say they can predict the weather by the pain in their joints.

Coping With The Cold

"Do what you can to keep warm," Gourley says. "Bundle up from head to toe in several layers, preheat the car before getting into it and make sure your home or apartment is kept warm." Other suggestions: Sleep under an electric blanket, warm clothing in the dryer before dressing and drink warm or hot drinks, such as coffee, tea or hot chocolate.

It's also important to keep moving, Gourley says. Try exercising the affected joints before going out in the cold weather. It also helps to maintain a regular exercise program year round. Exercise will not only loosen stiff joints, but will help prevent winter weight gain that puts more stress on painful joints.



**CONTINUED
ON NEXT PAGE**





Better Safe!



WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR FAMILY'S SAFETY

What **The Cold** Can Cause

Joint stiffness isn't the only problem low temperatures can cause:

Raynaud's Disease

Raynaud's Disease is a condition in which the blood vessels quickly narrow, reducing the flow of blood and causing the skin on the fingers, toes and even the nose to temporarily turn white, then bluish. As blood flow returns, the skin turns red and becomes painful. In rare severe cases, Raynaud's can cause skin sores or tissue death (gangrene) at the tips of the fingers and toes.

As with arthritis, the best advice for people with Raynaud's is to keep warm. "Wear mittens as opposed to gloves," Gourley advises. That way, the fingers can help keep each other warm.

Sjögren's Syndrome

Sjögren's Syndrome is another condition that can get worse in colder weather. In Sjögren's Syndrome, the immune system attacks the body's moisture-producing glands, leading to dryness of the eyes, mouth and other tissues. Cool, dry weather can exacerbate the situation.

People with Sjögren's Syndrome need to add moisture back into the environment when the air is dry. Run a humidifier to raise the humidity level in your home and use lotions after bathing to keep skin moist. Use artificial tears for dry eyes and keep a water bottle on hand to sip to relieve dry mouth. Be careful about using mouthwashes with alcohol or over-the-counter cold remedies, either of which can worsen dryness.

If you have symptoms brought on by cold weather, be sure to mention them to your doctor.

CHILLY PROBLEMS

If you have a health problem that gets worse in the cold, talk to your doctor about what to do. Here are some ideas for keeping warm, comfortable and safe:

- Bundle up from head to toe in several layers.
- Use a face mask that warms the air you breathe.
- Preheat the car before getting into it.
- Keep your home warm.
- Sleep with an electric blanket.
- Warm clothing in the dryer before dressing.
- Drink warm or hot drinks, such as coffee, hot tea or hot chocolate.
- Run a humidifier to raise the humidity level in your home.
- Use lotions on your skin.
- Keep physically active.
- Avoid falls. Use handrails, keep sidewalks free of snow and ice, and wear shoes with a good grip.



How You See Yourself

WHEN YOUR BODY IMAGE DOESN'T MEASURE UP

Do you like what you see when you look in the mirror? If your answer is “No,” you’re not alone. For many of us, there’s a growing gap between how our bodies look and how we’d like them to look.

Americans have generally gotten wider and flabbier over the past few decades, as obesity rates continue to climb. But at the same time, the media bombard us with images of people who seem impossibly thin or muscular. The gap between reality and expectations can leave many people feeling inadequate.

What’s Normal?

It’s normal to look in the mirror occasionally and wish for a firmer body or more glamorous hair. But some people find they can’t stop thinking about body flaws they believe they have. They may avoid going out with friends or even stop going to work because they feel ashamed of their skin, hair, weight or other features.

“They say they look ugly, flawed or deformed, but in reality they look fine,” says Dr. Katharine A. Phillips, a psychiatrist at Brown University. “The physical flaws they perceive are things we can’t see at all, or they’re really quite minimal.”

Having a negative body image like this isn’t just an attitude problem. It can take a toll on your mental and physical health. If excessive thoughts about your body cause great distress or interfere with your daily life, you may have a body image disorder, also known as body dysmorphic disorder (BDD).

A Closer Look At BDD

BDD is a psychiatric condition that affects about 1-2% of the population. It occurs slightly more often in women than in men. “People with BDD frequently think about an imagined defect in their physical appearance. The thoughts are difficult to resist or control,” Phillips says. “On average, these patients report that they think about their perceived appearance flaws for about 3–8 hours a day.”

Because of their imagined flaws, many people with BDD avoid going out in public or shun friends and family. About three-quarters have had major depression, and about 1 in 4 attempt suicide.



CONTINUED
ON NEXT PAGE

Negative Body Image:

▶▶▶▶▶ *Not Limited To Women*

Much attention has been paid to how culture and the media can damage women's feelings about their own bodies. But studies suggest that men and boys can also feel they can't measure up to the broad-shouldered, narrow-waisted, muscular men they see in ads, cartoons, TV shows, movies and even action figures.

"There's a climate in American society that rewards muscularity and equates it with masculinity," says Dr. Harrison Pope, a psychiatrist at Harvard Medical School.

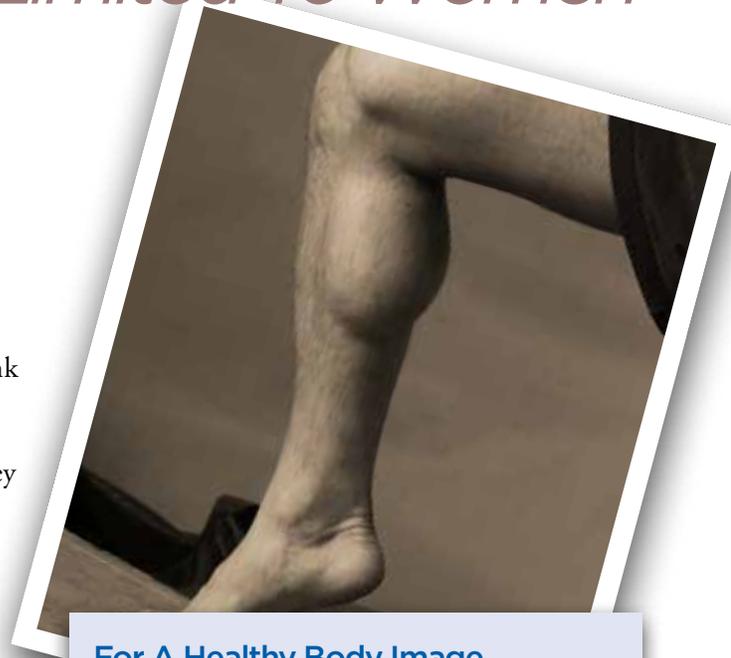
Pope and his colleagues have found a wide gap between what men think of their own bodies and what they believe women prefer. In one study, researchers asked men in the U.S. and Europe to select a body size and shape on a computer that they felt matched their own bodies. Then they selected a body that they thought women would find most attractive. On average, the men expected that women would prefer bodies with about 20 pounds more muscle than the men actually had.

A skewed view of how muscular you are may signal a type of BDD called muscle dysmorphia. It's sometimes found among bodybuilders. People with the disorder become obsessed with being more muscular. "They might look in a mirror and think that they look small and wimpy, even if they are actually large and muscular," Pope says. Their poor body image puts them at risk for illegal use of anabolic steroids and other drugs to gain muscle mass.

How To Spot BDD

BDD can be difficult to diagnose, because affected people look normal and are often too ashamed to talk about their concerns with appearance. Clues include frequent mirror-checking, excessive grooming, skin picking or covering up disliked body parts.

If you don't have a body image disorder, improving your attitude about your body might just be a matter of accepting that healthy bodies come in many shapes and sizes. We all want to look good, but you should never sacrifice your health to try to achieve a "perfect" body.



For A Healthy Body Image

You can improve your attitude about your body by making healthy lifestyle choices.

- Eat wholesome foods to promote healthy skin and hair, as well as strong bones.
- Exercise regularly to improve your health and boost your self-esteem and energy.
- Move and enjoy your body. Go walking, swimming, biking and dancing.
- Get plenty of rest to help manage stress and reduce anxiety.

Definitions

Body Image. What you think about your own body's size, shape and features.

Anabolic Steroids. Compounds, like the male sex hormone testosterone, that help to build muscle.



MONTHLY Quiz

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE ON A VARIETY OF WELLNESS TOPICS

- 1. Which of the following is not a good way to make healthy habits stick:**
 - a. Set realistic goals
 - b. Plan for obstacles
 - c. Isolate yourself
 - d. Track your progress
- 2. If you have trouble eating dairy products because they upset your stomach and you don't get enough calcium in other foods, a supplement might help.**
 True False
- 3. As the weather changes, so can the _____ in your joints.**
 - a. pressure
 - b. ligaments
 - c. lubrication
- 4. If excessive thoughts about your body cause great distress or interfere with your daily life, you may have a body image disorder, also known as:**
 - a. body dysmorphic disorder (BDD)
 - b. anorexia
 - c. bulimia
 - d. social anxiety disorder
- 5. Supplements pose no risk if you're taking other medications.**
 True False
- 6. In Sjögren's syndrome, the _____ attacks the body's moisture-producing glands, leading to dryness of the eyes, mouth and other tissues.**
 - a. cold air
 - b. humidity in the air
 - c. immune system
 - d. nervous system
- 7. To make a long-lasting change in your life, prepare yourself for the challenges you might face.**
 True False
- 8. Studies suggest that men and boys are not affected by the images of broad-shouldered, narrow-waisted, muscular men they see in ads, cartoons, TV shows, movies and even action figures.**
 True False



Make That Resolution

HOW TO ENSURE YOU MAINTAIN THAT HEALTHY HABIT



New Year's resolutions—they're easy to make but easier to break. Why is it so hard to make the healthy changes that we know can help us feel better and live longer? And why is it so hard to make them last?

Some of the most common New Year's resolutions are losing weight, getting more physical activity, eating more nutritious foods, quitting cigarettes, cutting back on alcohol, reducing stress and sleeping better. But no matter which healthy resolution you choose, research suggests that some common strategies can boost your chance of making the change a habit, a part of your daily lifestyle. Here are some solid strategies to keep in mind.

Set Realistic Goals

One challenge with New Year's resolutions is that people often set unrealistic goals. They can quickly become frustrated and give up. Therefore, any resolution to change should include small goals that are definable and accompanied by a solid plan on how you'll get to that goal.

For instance, a resolution to lose 30 pounds may seem overwhelming. Instead, try setting smaller goals of losing five pounds a month for six months. Think baby steps rather than giant leaps.

Develop An Action Plan

You might decide to walk a half hour each day to burn calories. You might stop buying vending machine snacks. Or you might limit and keep track of your daily calories. "These are specific behaviors that could help you meet your larger goal of losing 30 pounds," says Dr. Deborah Tate, an obesity and behavioral researcher at the University of North Carolina.

To make a long-lasting change in your life, prepare yourself for the challenges you might face. "Think about why you want to make the change. Is it important to you, or is it mostly influenced by others—like your doctor, your spouse or a friend?" says Tate. "Research suggests that if it's something you really want for yourself, if it's meaningful to you, you're more likely to stick to it."

Focus On The Benefits

Think of exactly how the change will enhance your life. For instance, when you stop smoking, your risk plummets for cancer, heart disease, stroke and early death. Reducing stress might cut your risk for heart disease and help you fight off germs. Even small improvements in your physical activity, weight or nutrition may help reduce your risk for disease and lengthen your life.



CONTINUED
ON NEXT PAGE

Surefire Strategies To Help Healthy Habits Stick

Surround Yourself With Support

Setting up a supportive environment is another step toward success. “Think about the physical support you’ll need, like the right equipment for exercise, appropriate clothing and the right kinds of foods to have at home,” says Dr. Christine Hunter, a behavioral researcher and clinical psychologist at NIH. Remove items that might trip up your efforts. If you’re quitting smoking, throw away your ashtrays and lighters. To improve your nutrition, put unhealthy but tempting foods on a hard-to-reach shelf, or get rid of them.

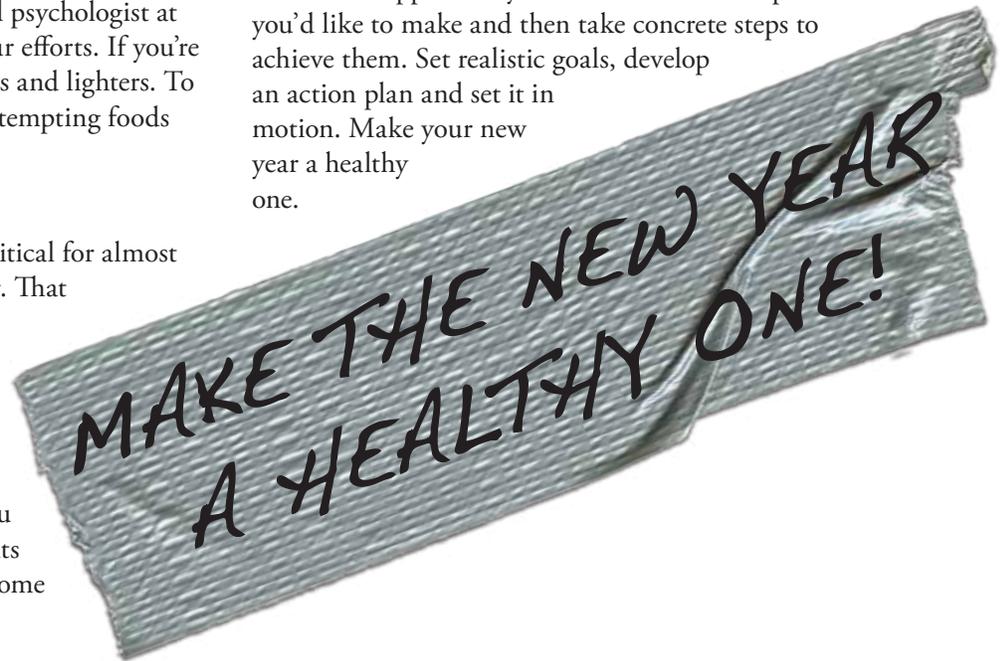
Monitor Yourself

“Self-monitoring or tracking seems to be critical for almost every sort of behavior change,” says Hunter. That includes jotting down the foods you eat, keeping an exercise diary or making a record of your sleeping patterns.

Monitoring yourself might feel like a burden, but it’s one of the best predictors of successful change. “Think about how you can make tracking more convenient, so it fits naturally into your life,” Hunter says. For some

people, that might be a pad of paper in a purse or pocket; for others, a mobile app or a computer program.

Of course, you don’t need a new year to make healthy changes; you can make them any time of the year. But New Year’s is an opportunity to think about the improvements you’d like to make and then take concrete steps to achieve them. Set realistic goals, develop an action plan and set it in motion. Make your new year a healthy one.



MAKING HEALTHY CHANGES

- **Set realistic goals.** Write down the steps that will help you achieve them.
- **Plan for obstacles.** Figure out how to overcome them. Don’t give up just because you’ve slipped.
- **Track your progress.** A journal or diary is one of the best tools for helping you stay focused and recover from slip-ups.
- **Get help.** Ask friends and family for support. Consider enrolling in a class or program.
- **Reward yourself.** Give yourself a healthy treat when you’ve achieved a small goal or milestone.
- **Add variety.** Keep things interesting by adding new activities or expanding your goals to make them more challenging.

The Scoop On **Supplements**

Dietary supplements include a broad range of vitamins, minerals, herbs and other substances meant to improve upon your diet. They can come as pills, capsules, powders and liquids.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, which regulates dietary supplements, treats them more like foods than like drugs. Dr. Paul M. Coates, director of the National Institutes of Health's Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS), says, "Dietary supplements are generally regarded as safe based on a long history of human use, unless proven otherwise. By contrast, drugs are not assumed to be safe until extensive testing has been done to prove their safety."

Supplements can play an important role in your health. Some doctors advise patients to take a multivitamin-mineral supplement to make sure they're getting enough of all the nutrients they need. While this may provide some insurance, Carol Haggans, a consultant with ODS, cautions, "People shouldn't feel they can make up for an unhealthy diet by taking a multivitamin-mineral supplement." A combination of all the vitamins and minerals together in foods provide the greatest health benefit, she says. "In general, if you eat a healthy diet, you shouldn't need to supplement it with extra nutrients."

Who Needs Supplements?

However, some people might need more of certain nutrients. Doctors often advise women of child-bearing age to take folic acid, for example. Many people don't get enough calcium. According to some surveys, 44% of boys and 58% of girls age 6-11 don't get enough and the numbers get even higher as people age. It's probably best to eat 2-3 servings per day of calcium-rich foods like dairy products. But if you have trouble eating dairy products because they upset your stomach and you don't get enough calcium in other foods, a supplement might help.

DO THEY WORK? SHOULD YOU BUY?

When it comes to supplements, resist the pressure to buy something on the spot. Ask a health care professional for advice or check credible sources like government web sites to find out if the product is safe and does what it says it does.



CONTINUED
ON NEXT PAGE

Supplements: Know The Risks And Benefits Before You Buy

Since some supplements may help you, it's easy to go a step farther and think that taking more would be even better. This can cost a lot and may not provide the benefit you expect. It can also be risky.

Consider This...

"Almost all of the nutrients have tolerable upper intake levels—the amount it's recommended you stay under each day," Haggans says. Amounts above these levels can be toxic. Too much vitamin A, for instance, can cause birth defects, liver problems, weak bones and nervous system disorders. Too much calcium can cause kidney problems and block your ability to use other minerals in your diet.

It's not difficult to get high doses of certain nutrients, either. Breakfast cereals have long been fortified with vitamins and minerals. Now, many other fortified products are crowding onto grocery shelves as consumers buy into the idea that more is better. Look at the foods and supplements you're eating together to make sure that your total intake of any one nutrient isn't too high. If you're concerned, talk to a health care provider such as a doctor, pharmacist or registered dietitian.

In the meantime, if you're considering taking a supplement, consult with your health care provider. Some supplements can interfere with other medications, so have a list ready of all the medications and supplements you're taking or considering.

If you decide that a particular dietary supplement is right for you, make sure you're buying a reliable brand. There are independent laboratories that test supplement products for quality and purity. "There are companies whose products are made to very high standards," Dr. Coates says, "but that's not always the case."

BEFORE USING DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS

- ✓ **Safety first.** Some products can be harmful when taken in high amounts, for a long time or along with certain other substances. Don't use a dietary supplement along with, or instead of, a prescription medicine without first consulting your health care provider.
- ✓ **Don't chase the latest headline.** Sound health advice is based on research over time, not a single study touted in the media.
- ✓ **Learn to spot false claims.** If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- ✓ **"Natural" doesn't mean safe.** Natural ingredients may interact with medicines, be dangerous for people with certain health conditions or be harmful in high doses. For example, peppermint tea is generally safe to drink, but you can get a toxic dose of oil extracted from peppermint leaves.

