



Eating for Cold Weather

The food you eat affects your body. When the temperature drops and cold weather sets in, fuel your body with food that can help raise your body temperature and make you feel warm. Anyone who works in cold weather needs to take a few precautions in order to stay comfortable, safe, and still perform at an optimal level when temperatures drop.

What you eat and drink before and during cold-weather work can also help you perform your best and stay comfortable and safe. Proper nutrition helps regulate your core temperature, keeps your body warm and provides enough fuel for your working muscles. In warm weather it's easy to sweat to regulate your temperature and remove excess heat, but in cold weather you need to generate more heat to stay warm.

When the weather is cold, eating or drinking something hot increases the sensation of being warm. Baked noodle casseroles, potpies, freshly baked breads, hearty stews, soups and roasts tend to be particularly satisfying. An added benefit of a home-cooked, hot meal is the kitchen -- and often the entire house -- becomes warmer. This makes the home feel more welcoming when the air outside is frigid. If you do not have time to spend preparing a meal, plenty of recipes for roasts, soups and stews use a slow cooker, reducing hands-on work to about 10 minutes. For a different take on "hot" foods, making your meals spicy can make you feel warmer as well.

A lack of sunlight, common in cold weather and cold climates, can cause "winter depression" in many individuals. This is also known as S.A.D., or seasonal affective disorder. Cravings for carbohydrate-rich foods are common when affected by winter depression. Some individuals report feeling better during and after carbohydrate consumption. Rather than reaching for cake or cookies, choose a healthier option -- such as complex carbohydrates. Some of the best choices for complex carbs include whole grain breads and pastas, brown rice, legumes, millet and whole oats.

In the cold, the last thing on your mind is likely a glass of cold water or iced tea. However, you become dehydrated just as easily in cold temperatures as you do in warm weather. To combat winter dehydration, a cup of warm tea is an excellent choice. Drinking tea counts toward a healthy daily intake of eight 8-ounce glasses of water. Ginger tea is a particularly good option, as this spice naturally warms your body. If you do not enjoy ginger tea, any spiced tea is a good substitute. Hot cider is another comforting, hydrating choice during cold temperatures. A cup or two of coffee is fine to drink but it does not count toward your day's water intake.

A layer of fat on your body acts as insulation to protect you from the cold, but that is not why fat is important during the winter. Your body uses fats to facilitate the absorption of



vitamins A, E, K and D. Vitamin deficiencies, particularly vitamin D deficiency, can contribute to depression and damage your health. Sunlight aids in vitamin D absorption, and most individuals get less sun when temperatures drop. Healthy fats to add to your diet include fish, nuts, nut butter, olives, avocados and tofu. If you opt for red meat, keep in mind that one serving is about 3 ounces and its consumption is best limited to three times weekly.