

(Style on a Dime) Save money by staying healthy this winter

Written by Marcia Humphrey

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Last week my entire family got flu shots in efforts to stay healthy during this year's cold and flu season. This is the first time I have ever had the shot because I am kind of old school when it comes to taking medicines. I believe in things like castor oil, garlic, and spicy soups for curing what ails our clan. But with the flu virus getting more vicious with each passing year (let's not even talk about H1N1), I thought we'd give it a try this time.

Even though I got my shot, I am not under the false impression that the flu shot alone is the complete answer for all winter ailments. It's really one of many preventive measures that should be taken to stay in top shape during this cold and flu season. Since missing work often means missing money from the paycheck I know we all want to stay well. Check out this list of foods and healthy practices that can help your body stay cold-free and flu-free.

Think real food not fake

While vitamins have their place, they should not be a substitute for real food. For instance, oranges and grapefruits have more overall benefits than a vitamin C pill. Among other things, an orange is packed with magnesium, potassium, folate, and vitamin B6. Since the citrus fruits will be in season during winter, make sure you get your daily dose (and yes, eating oranges and grapefruits are better for you than drinking it from a carton!).

Think more fruit and vegetables

Although folks tend to eat less fruit and veggies in winter, they should be loading up more! Even though there is not as much fruit in season during winter, the freezer isles will have everything you need, without skimping on the nutrients. Dark veggies like collards, spinach, and kale pack a big punch. Also, consider nontraditional veggies like bok choy, brussel sprouts, and watercress. Mix it up by grabbing a pomegranate, a kiwi, and blueberries, and of course don't forget the staples; strawberries, bananas, tomatoes, and grapes (again, frozen is fine).

Think lean proteins

If you want to have the benefit of a strong immune system, lean proteins play an important role. Foods like lean meats, fish, poultry, whole grains, legumes (black beans, edamame, lentils) nuts (walnuts and almonds), and seeds are great options to help keep you strong and healthy.

Think healthy choices

It is not only what you eat that's important, it's also wise to consider what you shouldn't eat. For instance limit the amount of sugary snacks and unhealthy fats. Choose nutritious snacks-like trail mix or dried fruit-and keep them handy, then you'll be less likely to eat that chocolate bar. Also, make exercise a regular part of your routine-it's a stress reliever and mood booster. Remember to keep hydrated with water and herbal teas, while limiting pop and caffeine. Finally, get to bed at a decent hour. I admit to being challenged by this one myself. Truth is, your mild symptoms of depression or anxiety could likely disappear with proper rest (consider that remedy before rushing off to your doctor).

This winter do you want to avoid the sniffles, sneezing, coughing, aching, stuffy head, and feverish nights that accompany a cold or flu?? Don't resort to being scared and worried until spring; be proactive and be good to your body. Give it the food it needs, the physical activity it

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needs, the fluids it needs, and the rest it needs. This way you won't have to spend your hard-earned money on doctor visits for you and your family. Lastly, yet most important: pray. Pray for courage to walk through whatever you are faced with this season and for daily wisdom to make healthy choices. God made you stronger than you think! Enjoy!

Marcia Humphrey is an interior decorator and home stager who specializes in achieving high style at a *low cost*. *A native of Michigan, she and her husband, Lonnie, have three children.*