

# BE WINTER HEALTHY

## GET A FLU SHOT.

For detailed information on vaccine availability, visit [www.vaccines.gov/find-vaccines](http://www.vaccines.gov/find-vaccines). No one wants to come down with the flu — it can cause symptoms such as coughing, congestion, fever, and fatigue that can last up to two weeks. Protect yourself from getting sick by getting the flu vaccine. Recent studies show that flu vaccination reduces the risk of flu between 40 to 60 percent.

## GET THE BIVALENT COVID BOOSTER.

It contains both the original vaccine strain [of the virus] and a strain derived from the BA.5 omicron variant, which is currently dominating here in the U.S., so that we can maximize protection against severe disease and potentially from infection. More at [vaxfinder.mass.gov](http://vaxfinder.mass.gov).

## WASH YOUR HANDS OFTEN.

Winter is the peak season for contagious illnesses; in addition to COVID-19, you still need to take precautions to protect against cold and flu. The most effective way to remove and prevent the spread of illness-causing germs is to wash your hands frequently. When washing your hands, remember to get a good lather of soap on your hands, and scrub for at least 20 seconds with warm water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to help slow the spread of viruses.

## EAT FOR IMMUNITY.

As part of your efforts to stay well and avoid the cold and flu this winter, it's important to eat healthy foods that support your immune system, including mushrooms, garlic, citrus fruits, herbs and spices, probiotics, prebiotics, and chicken soup. For example, yogurt is one of the best sources of probiotics. Apples, bananas, garlic, and onions are good sources of prebiotics.

## KEEP MOVING.

The winter months can be a challenging time to stick to your exercise routine, the cold weather can also be a deterrent to getting outside for some exercise. When the weather is nice, take the opportunity to get some fresh air with a hike in one of the area's many trails.



## GET SOME SUN.

While the availability of sunlight is limited during the winter months, it's important to spend some time outdoors even when it's cold. Sunlight has been shown to help improve your mood by boosting the release of a hormone called serotonin. Exposure to sunlight also helps regulate your circadian rhythm, which controls your body clock and affects sleep habits. But be sure to use your sunscreen, the sun's rays, even in the winter, can still have damaging effects on your skin. Choose a sunscreen that has an SPF factor of 30 or above to ensure adequate protection.

## MAINTAIN GOOD SKIN HEALTH

Cold weather can wreak havoc on your skin, leaving you with dryness, flaking, cracking, and in some cases, eczema. To keep your skin moist and healthy through the winter, be sure to drink plenty of water, hydrate your skin with an ointment moisturizer, and use sunscreen whenever you're out during the day.