

Ways to Feel Better This Winter



By Dr. Jon Sebby, DC, ART Provider –

This is the time of year that we all start to feel exhausted, sore and achy from sitting too much, hunching over our computers, slipping on ice, as well as from lack of sunshine and exercise. Follow these steps to help you relieve your aches and pains and to feel better from the inside out.

It's All in the Way You Breathe

Proper breathing is vital to life and can enhance sport performance, increase relaxation and decrease pain. Diaphragmatic breathing was practiced by the ancient yogi's and it's the breathing that infants do as soon as they are born. It is not until the child starts running around and experiences a flight or fight response do they switch to chest breathing. The flight or fight response is initiated when we become out of breath and need to find another way to bring more oxygen into our system. Chest breathing is normal for people out of breath. However, when we are not in this state we should be breathing with our diaphragm and abdomen.

To practice diaphragmatic breathing, sit tall. Place one hand on the abdomen and the other on your upper chest. If you do a diaphragmatic breath, you should feel the lower hand on your abdomen move out with the inhalation and in with the exhalation. The top hand on the chest should remain relatively still. If you find it hard to do sitting down, then try lying on the floor with knees bent. Several five to 10 minute sessions of diaphragmatic breathing each day can be beneficial. It can feel awkward at first to breathe without moving the chest, but people may note that regular sessions

promote feelings of relaxation, focus, and comfort and before you know it you will naturally do diaphragmatic breathing.

Boost Your Vitamin D Levels

During the winter months in Chicago, a majority of us are not getting enough sun exposure to produce adequate levels of vitamin D. Eating certain foods high in vitamin D and supplementation for most of us is needed. Cod liver oil is a great supplement that is high in the vitamin and also provides healthy omega-3 fats. Some foods that are high in vitamin D include:

Salmon and other fish

Mushrooms

Shrimp

Eggs

Grassfed Beef Liver

Get Enough Magnesium

If you are feeling tired and irritable, you may have a magnesium deficiency. Adequate amount of magnesium helps the body regulate melatonin, which is why many people report better sleep after increasing their intake through certain foods or by starting supplementation. Longer and more restful sleep increases the body's natural production of human growth hormone. Try adding these foods that are high in magnesium to your diet:

Halibut

Spinach

Pumpkin Seeds

Okra

Plantains/Bananas

Beans

Oysters

As for supplementation, Natural Calm (available at WholeFoods) or Poliquin's UberMag with L-Tryptophan is an excellent supplement to take before bed.

Get Massages on a Regular Basis

Massage is recognized as being extremely effective in relieving muscle pain, tension, and soreness. It is so effective at relieving pain because it addresses the cause of the pain. Typically, pain is a result of areas of a muscle that become stagnant either from postural deviations (hunching too much) or trauma (falling on ice). When muscles don't function properly, other muscles compensate and circulation to the muscles decrease causing a buildup of cell fragments, acids, and other substances. Taught bands of tissue, or trigger points, develop in the muscle causing soreness and tension. By observing postural deviations, assessing muscle weakness, and through palpation, a massage therapist can find trigger points and use specific techniques to eliminate them.

Massage also increases circulation to the tissue. As fresh blood and oxygen increases to the stagnant area toxins are flushed from the tissue and absorbed into the lymph system where they are either reused or excreted from the body.