



From the Food Bank Kitchen

The Food Bank
of Western Massachusetts

Winter Nourishment

During the winter months many people may feel lethargic, and run down. The bitter cold temperatures keep people bundled up inside, which can lead to the spread of germs. There are a few changes a person can make to boost their health during the winter months: handwashing regularly with warm soap and water can stop the spread of germs, getting a flu shot can prevent a person from getting the virus, and a diet rich in fruits and veggies can boost immunity.

What happens when the winter blues won't go away?

Since it is so cold, many may feel less inclined to get exercise outside as well. Being inside all day can cause people to feel the effects of Seasonal Affective Disorder, or S.A.D

Symptoms of S.A.D may include: feeling depressed nearly every day, losing interest in activities once enjoyed, low energy, having problems sleeping, experiencing changes in appetite or weight, feeling agitated, difficulty concentrating, feeling hopeless, or worthless, and having thoughts of death and suicide.

What causes S.A.D?

Reduced levels of sunlight in the fall in winter disrupts the body's internal clock and leads to these feelings of depression. The reduced sunlight can also disrupt serotonin and melatonin levels in the body.

Treatment for S.A.D

Try to get in sunlight as much as possible: Bundle up and take walks around the neighborhood. Keep blinds open during the day to get in as much natural light as possible.

Stick to a schedule: Many people who suffer from S.A.D have trouble sleeping. Sticking to a regular sleep schedule can improve sleep and alleviate the feeling of lethargy.

Stay active: Stay active in the community and keep a busy schedule. Getting out of the house keeps a person from feeling isolated and alone during the winter months.

Get more vitamin D: Low levels of vitamin D have been linked to S.A.D. People at risk for vitamin D deficiency are the elderly, homebound individuals, and people who live at northern latitudes. Vitamin D supplementation can be prescribed by a physician to help fight a deficiency.

*Talk to a doctor: Sometimes home remedies are not enough, and anti depressants can help a person overcome seasonal depression. **It is important to see a doctor before these symptoms escalate.***

Mood Boosting Foods

Lean Proteins: Lean proteins carry lots of amino acids that may positively affect the mood. Protein without the saturated fat is also a great source of energy to beat fatigue. Lean protein sources include: poultry, fish, nuts, and beans.

Berries: Feeling stressed and upset can deplete the body of nutrients. Deep blue and red colored berries can prevent the release of cortisol, a stress hormone produced by the adrenal gland. Some berries to snack on include blueberries, raspberries, and strawberries.

Folic Acid: Evidence has suggested that low folate status may be detrimental to mood, and associated with low levels of serotonin. Leafy greens, sunflower seeds, oatmeal, lentils, and fortified cereals all have high amounts of folic acid.

Vitamin B12: B12 and the other B vitamins play a role in producing chemicals in the brain that affect mood and other brain functions. Food sources of vitamin B12 include: lean beef, shellfish, eggs, cottage cheese, yogurt, and fortified cereals.

Vitamin D: It is hard for people in the Northeast to get Vitamin D from sunshine in the winter months. Food sources of vitamin D include milk, egg yolks, and fish with bones such as sardines.

Apple Pie Overnight Oats

Serves: 1

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1/2 C old fashioned oats

1/4 C diced apples

1/2 C milk

1/4 tsp ground cinnamon

1/4 C plain Greek yogurt

1 tsp maple syrup

Directions: Using a 16-ounce mason jar (or container), add oats and milk; layer with the rest of the ingredients. Refrigerate overnight, serve cold.

Nutritional Info: Calories 290, Fat 4.5 g, Saturated fat 1.5g, Sodium 75g, Carbs, 49g, Fiber 6g, Sugars 19g, Protein 15g.



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Lentil Soup with Cabbage and Turkey Kielbasa

Serves:6

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- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 pound Turkey kielbasa, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 stems rosemary
- 1 carrot, peeled and chopped
- 4 stalks celery, chopped
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste

- 4 cups cabbage, finely chopped
- Grated nutmeg (optional)
- 1/2 cup dry red or white wine (optional, substitute 2 Tbsp red wine vinegar)
- 6 cups low sodium chicken broth
- 1 1/4 cups brown lentils
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Parmesan cheese (optional)

Directions: Heat the oil in a soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the kielbasa and cook until fragrant. Add the onions, garlic, bay leaves, rosemary, carrots, onions, and season with salt and pepper. Cook until the vegetables are soft, around 7-8 minutes. Stir in the cabbage and nutmeg, add the wine or vinegar to deglaze the pot, stirring and scraping up any browned bits from the bottom. Stir in the chicken broth and 2 cups water and bring to a boil. Stir in the lentils and cook at a low, bubbly simmer until the lentils are tender, 30-35 minutes. Remove the rosemary stems and bay leaves. Ladle the soup into bowls and top with parmesan cheese.

Nutritional Info: Calories 325, Total fat 12g, Saturated fat 2g, Sodium 219mg, Carbohydrates 35g, Sugar 6g, Fiber 12g, Protein 21g.

One serving of soup has 63% of the daily value of folate, lots of B vitamins, and turkey and lentils are lean proteins!

Yogurt– Berry Parfait

Serves: 4

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- 2-3 cups fresh or frozen mixed berries such as blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, blackberries
- 1 quart plain Greek yogurt

- 1/4 cup granola
- 1 tsp honey or maple syrup (optional)

Directions: If using frozen berries: thaw the berries, cut the strawberries into pieces if using. Spoon a layer of yogurt into 4 individual bowls. Add a layer of berries and sprinkle with granola. Repeat the layering once or twice more depending on the height of the bowl, ending with a layer of granola. Drizzle with honey or maple syrup.

Nutritional Info: Calories 313, Total fat 12 grams, Saturated fat 6 grams, Sodium 155 mg, Carbohydrates 38 grams, Fiber 5 grams, Protein 14 grams, Sugar 25 grams

Immunity Boosting Chicken Soup

Serves: 6

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- 1/2 cup brown rice
- 2 cups water
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 small onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 carrots, peeled and chopped

- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1-1/2 teaspoon curry
- 4 cups low sodium chicken broth
- 1 pound cooked chicken, cut into bite sized pieces (leftover chicken works well)
- Scallions and cilantro for garnish (optional)

Directions: In a medium sauce pan, cook the rice following the directions on the package. While the rice is cooking, heat the olive oil in a large pot. Add the onion, carrots and celery and cook for 6-7 minutes until the onion is soft and translucent, stirring occasionally. Add the garlic and cook for another 1-2 minutes until the garlic is fragrant, stirring occasionally. Add the curry powder, chicken broth, and cooked chicken, stir to combine. Continue to cook until the soup reaches a simmer. Then reduce heat to medium-low, cover with a lid and let simmer for about 20 minutes. When the rice is cooked, add to the soup and stir. Let simmer for another 10 minutes. Pour into bowls, and garnish with scallions and cilantro.

Nutritional Info: Calories 207, Total fat 10 grams, Saturated fat 2 grams, Sodium 304 mg, Carbohydrates 13 grams, Fiber 2 grams, Protein 19 grams, Sugar 3 grams