



Homewood
Health | Santé

WINTER IS COMING

A guide to focus on health,
wellness and embracing the season

WINTER IS A TIME TO HELP US

Recognize the healthy connections we need to make to find balance in our lives

Summer has warm rays of sun that stretch into golden evenings, Fall has movement through wind, and glorious transformations through colour-shifting leaves, and Winter?

It's a snow-covered landscape, uniform and simple, that covers the complexities gently insulated beneath and lets them take their pause to rejuvenate until spring.

Frankly, a lot of people shudder and do their best to avoid thinking about winter for as long as possible. It's merely an annoyance before spring. We have turned winter into something ominous, foreboding and desolate, loaded with work and inconvenience. We've set it up as something to do battle with.

But winter has a quiet beauty and purpose all of its own. It represents introspection, contemplation, release, renewal, and when you think about it, it is actually the most wonderful and essential incubator for potential.

In our quest to help you keep moving forward and improve your life, Homewood Health delivers a wide range of ready-to-use and easy-to-access services that will help steady yourself and find a path in life that feels comfortable and safe.

This month, we invite you to explore tools and resources within four corresponding areas of focus. They will help you take action and create health so you find balance at work, at home and in your community.

Here are this season's themes:



FINANCES AND BUDGETING

Making a list...checking
it twice: but then adding to it!



Winter is loaded with celebrations and gatherings where people come together because they want to feel connected through traditions and spending time with others. Of course, many celebrations involve the exchange of gifts and sharing of food. While festivities are one of the hallmarks of the winter season, all the feasting, parties, gift exchanges -- even buying outfits to wear -- can add up to big expenses that your finances can have a hard time recovering from.

Retailers begin rolling out their products, showcasing sales and special promotions, earlier and earlier each year. For them, capturing consumer dollars that are primed for spending on winter celebrations can mean the difference between turning a profit or not. They aim to stock the "must have" products, whipping consumers into a frenzy and have them driving all over town to track down.

It's easy for us to get caught up in that cycle because we are motivated to make sure that this year's celebrations will be the best ever! Even if we start out with good intentions, making lists and doing our very best to create budgets to help control spending, it's sometimes too easy to give up on our convictions and cross into over-spending territory. Our choices might make for wonderful moments and memories as we celebrate, but the deferred repercussions can hit us mid-winter, long after the festivities have wrapped up, and leave lasting effects.

Be aware of how vulnerable you are to having your emotions influence your purchases. Buying multiples of something "just in case" or because "it's a good deal" can have your spending creep quickly outside of what you planned. And while putting purchases on credit offers the ultimate in convenience, being tempted to buy too much because credit is readily available can find you revisiting those decisions repeatedly with regret into the new year, once the bills arrive.

Instead, try grounding yourself in budget friendly and simple things. Think of the true meaning of these celebrations and focus more on the time spent together. Explore your creative side by starting new traditions where gifts or tokens are handcrafted -- they don't have to be perfect masterpieces! Artistic gifts can be made from found items. Sentiments can be expressed through stories or song. And recipients will simply be honoured to have received something meaningful as an experience that you invested your time in, while inspired by them.

FINANCES AND BUDGETING

Ooops! I did it again.

If you find yourself wincing in January as you open your credit card bills, long after the trim, decorations and packages have been put away, there are some things you can do to nudge yourself off of that repeating track. Order your credit bills from smallest to largest. If you are not able to pay them off completely, look at first covering off the minimum payments on each, and then determine how much extra money you have after that. Next, put the extra amount towards the smallest bill. Keep doing this until the smallest bill has been paid in full. Once that happens, you can then take the money you would have paid on the smallest bill's minimum payment, plus the extra amount you added, and put all of that towards the next smallest bill and so on. This method helps you keep focused on your goal, and shows your accomplishment at vanquishing your debt. It's real progress you can see.

Pennies saved, pennies earned.

Have you ever heard the expression "A penny saved is a penny earned?" It first appeared in print in 1899 in a British literary magazine and was meant to encourage people to save money. While the magazine went the way of the penny long ago, we can still recognize the intention behind saving and explore simple techniques now that will help you be more prepared for winter celebrations in the following year.

Many financial institutions offer a feature where you can add a sub-account to your main account at no cost. Open one and start to transfer a set amount into that sub-account at a regular frequency. It may be that you transfer funds over each Friday, or each payday. The point is to establish a pattern of savings behaviour. The deposits don't have to be large, just consistent. For instance, if you can find \$25 to save each week, in a month's time, you've saved \$100 towards next year's festivities. If you get into this good habit, by the end of fall, you could have \$1100 saved to put towards your new budget!

For more ideas and resources to help you establish or maintain your financial goals or learn some creative budgeting tips, visit homeweb.ca.

DEALING WITH DEPRESSION

Recognizing how winter can also affect physical and emotional health

Winter – with its shorter days and colder temperatures -- can have a significant effect on our health, sometimes making us feel like we just want to stay inside and hibernate until spring. It's important to be aware of physical and emotional changes you could experience during this season, so you can stay balanced.

Staying healthy in sweater weather

The change in available daylight can mean that we aren't able to get our recommended daily doses of key vitamins such as Vitamin D. Our skin uses sunlight – specifically the UVB rays – to produce vitamin D for our bodies. Doctors and researchers have completed interesting studies on people in northern climates who experience reduced sunlight during the winter months, looking at the effects that Vitamin D deficiencies can have on people's health. Many physicians now recommend daily supplementation. You may want to check with your doctor to see if a Vitamin D supplement is right for you.

Dressing in layers for colder weather is another way that you can make winter more enjoyable. Base layers, like undershirts and long underwear, provide extra insulation and can help wick away sweat to keep you warm and dry. Insulated clothing – jackets, pants, footwear, hats, scarves and mittens – all help trap body heat and make it more bearable to be outside when temperatures plummet. You want to avoid frostbite and freezing of exposed skin and extremities, so it is worth the additional time and effort to bundle up!



DEALING WITH DEPRESSION

Come to your emotional rescue

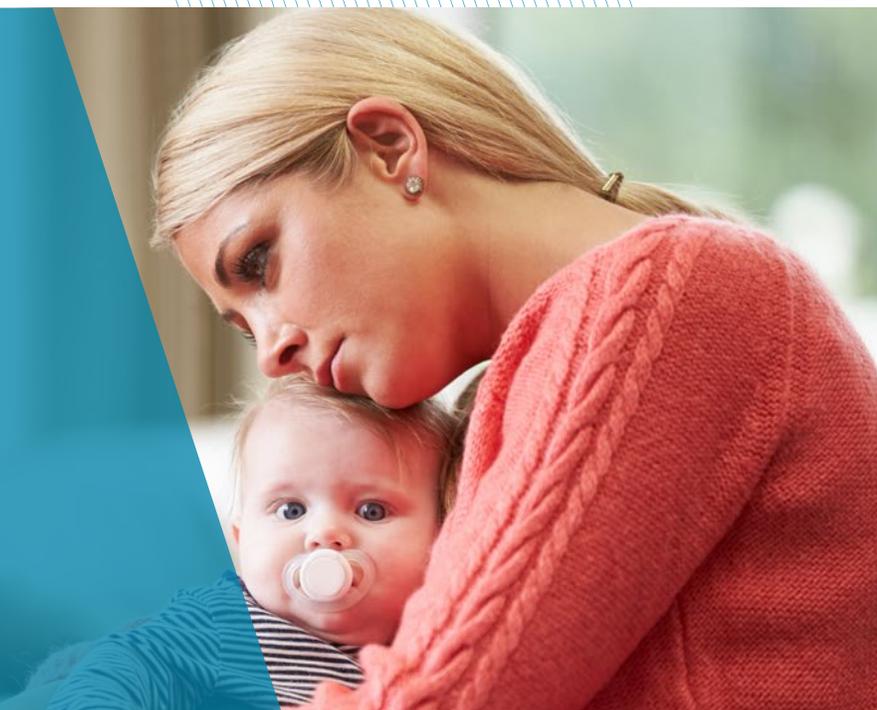
On cold days you may not want to venture too far, or even leave the house at all. If you find that these kinds of feelings continue, increase, or are joined by anxiety, sadness, despair, fatigue and feelings of hopelessness, you may want to visit a physician. You could be experiencing symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), a form of depression. Researchers have even found links between Vitamin D deficiencies and SAD. You can combat SAD by staying connected to family and friends and getting outside for even some short bursts of exercise.

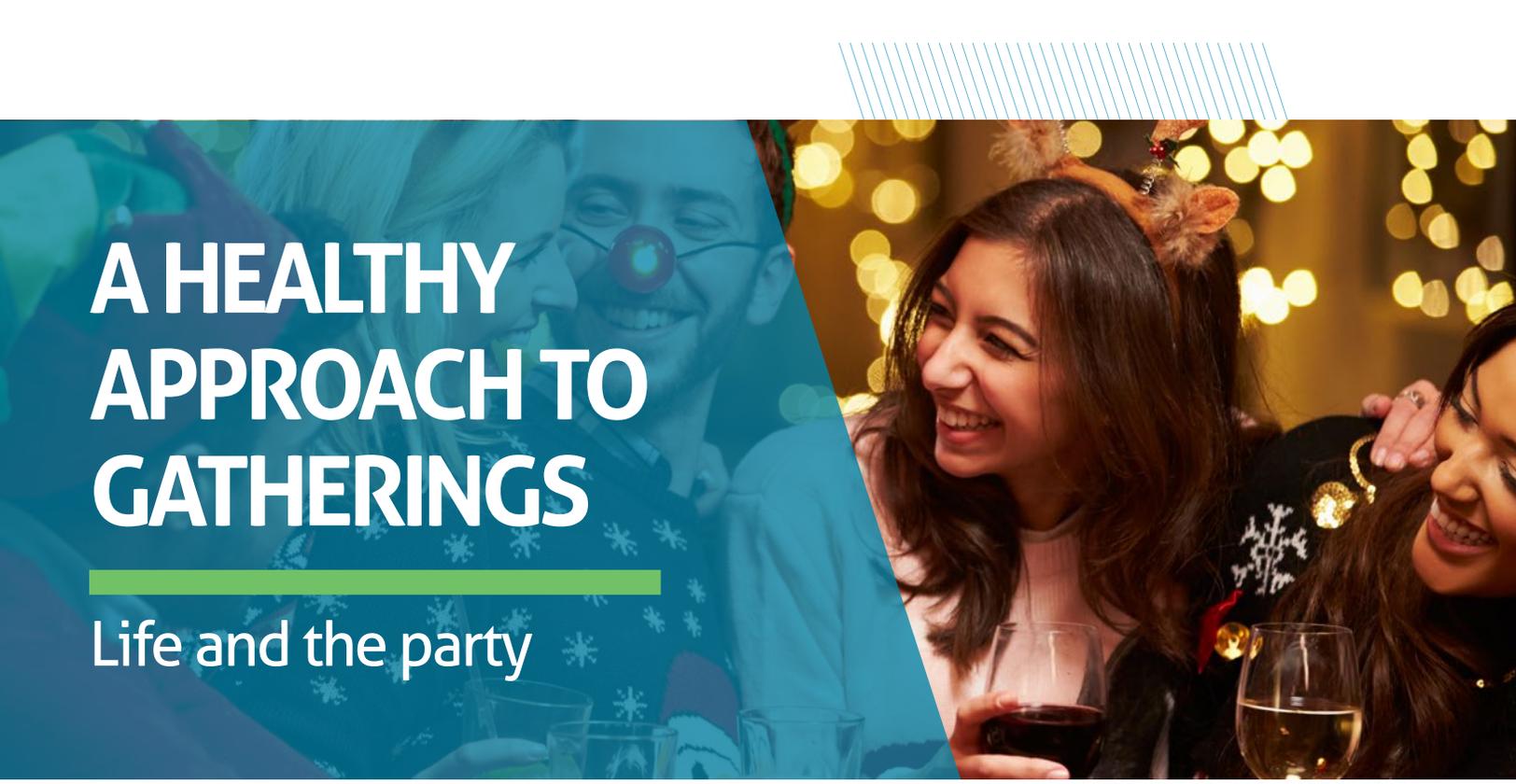
Walking in fresh fallen snow, ice-skating, building a snowman, looking for birds or tracks from small animals or even just trying to catch snowflakes on your tongue may be ways little ways you can enjoy the outdoors in winter. You may want explore activities such as skiing or snowboarding, sledding or snowshoeing. If you are fortunate enough to live near nature centres, they often have programming that focuses on helping people explore winter ecosystems, which can provide an interesting perspective on how other species survive outside during the winter season. Some cities have places that put on light displays for people to view or galleries that offer special programming to help people learn new abilities or hobbies – like painting, knitting or sculpting with clay. There are a lot of different ways you can connect with others in the community during the winter months.

Maintain connections with family and friends

Caring for one another means checking in regularly to see how family and friends are faring during the season. Winter celebrations offer the perfect opportunity to spend time together, but recognize that they can be stressful at times. Appreciate the time and togetherness and remove yourself from any confrontations that may arise to maintain your sense of wellness and practice good self-care.

For more ideas and resources to help you recognize signs of depression and Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), visit homeweb.ca.





A HEALTHY APPROACH TO GATHERINGS

Life and the party

One of the mainstays of winter are holiday gatherings. They can be chances for co-workers and friends to gather in celebration, acknowledge successes they have experienced through the year, and generally have a great time together. Whether these events are large gatherings held at more formal venues or more intimate affairs at people's homes, there are ways you can be sure to enjoy the occasions and not over-indulge.

Keep in mind that big events may require you to plan for clothing, childcare, and transportation. There could also be costs for admission tickets or food and beverage purchases. Reduce stress and enjoy the party more by planning ahead and making all necessary arrangements well in advance. Don't feel pressured to buy a new outfit, but if you do decide to shop for something new, be sure you aren't too close to the date of the event. This could cause additional stress and affect your enjoyment.

At the party, you may be offered many types of foods you wouldn't normally eat; appetizers, rich dishes and desserts. One of the problems with this type of cuisine is that it's all morsel-sized, so it's easy to forget how much you have eaten. A good rule of thumb is to have between three and five pieces if there is also a sit-down meal. If it's an hors d'oeuvres party, try to limit yourself to between seven and ten. For sweets, allow yourself two or three small bites. These foods are delicious but can also be very calorie dense. Additionally, if you are consuming alcohol, the total calories consumed in one evening can quickly add up.

Here are a few additional tips to help you enjoy the gathering:

- Challenge yourself to not have two full hands while you mingle. Have only a drink OR food in your hands at any one time.
- Commit to a drink limit. Whether alcoholic or non-alcoholic, sometimes party beverages can also be high in sugar. Be aware of your consumption and if you are drinking alcohol, be sure to have transportation pre-arranged or assign a designated driver.
- Don't overstay. Have a timeframe in mind for how long you expect to be at the event. Re-assess closer to that time and be sure that if you stay longer, you are comfortable it's for the right reasons.



A HEALTHY APPROACH TO GATHERINGS

If you are the host with the most...

Be sure to have a pre-established budget and consider offers from people on the guest list to bring food or beverages to help take some of the pressure off of you. It's also a very busy time of year, so don't be offended if your guests can't attend or can only drop in later. Holiday parties are best planned well-ahead as people's availability can be lessened the closer you get to various winter celebrations.

Don't forget to enlist support from your family members to prepare your home, or the venue, for your guests. If you have pets and the party is at your home, you will want to put them in a room, away from all of the activity. You may not be aware of allergies or uneasiness of guests around animals.

Make a checklist of things to do the day before and day of the party and be sure to add in time for yourself. You will want to feel your best and enjoy the time with your guests, not feel exhausted. When the party ends, clear certain high-priority things for safety, such as alcoholic drinks, or leftover food, and consider leaving the rest of the cleanup until the following day. You'll feel more refreshed and have better enjoyment of the event if you don't put pressure on yourself to get everything done before you head to bed.

For more ideas and resources to help you enjoy social gatherings and eating well visit homeweb.ca.

RESOLUTIONS



Promises to keep

Towards the end of December, nostalgia and reflection can set in and you may feel compelled to set a New Year's Resolution. While it's great to evaluate aspects of our lives that we want to earmark for change, be sure that the timing is right and that you are making the change for the right reasons.

It's important to be kind to yourself, not just others. Establish realistic, attainable and manageable goals that focus on your whole health and wellness, not ones that merely target certain components. The vast majority of people who tie resolutions to New Year's Day set unrealistic expectations for themselves and then feel great disappointment when they cannot maintain their commitments.

Do research first, then plan how to incorporate the change

Depending on your area of focus for self-improvement, you will generally need to do a bit of research to plan how to incorporate the change into your life. You don't need to wait until New Year's Day to investigate, nor do you need to use that particular day as your starting day. The most important thing for you to consider is the reason why you would like to make the change and be sure you are motivated by self-care. Who knows? By the time New Year's rolls around, you may have already begun forming a new behaviour or routine, and New Year's Eve may be a time to celebrate actual progress rather than just an idea.

RESOLUTIONS

Start small, keep it manageable and enlist support

Keep the whole process of change in mind as you work towards your goal. While it's important to have an end in mind, don't forget about the journey you take to get there. Celebrating small milestones along the way gives you encouragement and helps you recognize when you have made progress. To help you find success, you may want to explore different planning tools or smartphone apps that help keep you on track. Some allow you to input all of the steps along the path to change.

One final consideration is to share your resolution with someone you trust, who will act as an advocate and check in with you periodically to discuss your progress. You want to have someone who will offer support, encouragement and help you stay on track.

Realize that with your desire and action plan, the change you are making is attainable. You are doing something for yourself which could have a ripple effect to inspire others. Allow yourself to acknowledge and feel a sense of accomplishment. The better you feel about yourself, the more likely you are to have a positive view of your life.

For more ideas and resources to help you set and meet goals, visit homeweb.ca.



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