

## Staying Healthy in Winter

Cold, wet and dark – three things that can breed ill health. How do we stay healthy in winter?

### What are the biggest threats to health in winter?

- Being in close contact with people – we tend to stay inside more so we're in close contact with people which means bacteria and viruses can spread more easily.
- Getting cold – when we get cold our body has to work harder to warm up leaving less energy for the immune system.
- Darkness – Lack of sunlight has significant effects on our physical and mental health.
- Wet or icy pavements – Slipping and falling is easier on wet or icy footpaths.

### What illness do we have to look out for?

- The most common thing people get during the colder months are colds and flus – these are easily passed by people coughing or sneezing close to us. We can catch them anywhere: on the train, in the supermarket and from friends or family.
- Gastro illnesses are common – diarrhoea and vomiting are the most common complaints. These may be caused by spoiled food but more commonly they're a virus in winter.
- Pneumonia – Pneumonia is particularly common among older people. It's often overlooked until they start having difficulty breathing so it's worth getting any severe cough checked out.

### What can we do to avoid getting sick?

- Wash your hands – a lot! Wash your hands after toileting, before handling food or eating, after you cough or sneeze. You may even want to carry some hand sanitiser to clean your hands in public or if you have to eat out.
- Use disinfectant wipes – If you're going to eat at a food court or in a very public place, think about how easy it is for other people to cough or sneeze on your table and cutlery.
- Cover your mouth and nose – if you're in a lift or confined space and somebody starts coughing, cover your nose and mouth with a handkerchief or tissue: it may stop you from breathing in droplets that contain their virus.
- Avoid people who are clearly sick – Simply try to stay away from them: the checkout operator who's coughing and hacking, the work colleague who complains about diarrhoea or the person at the gym who's sneezing and blowing their nose.

### What lifestyle changes can help our health?

- Stay warm – dress for the weather and remember to take a raincoat or umbrella.
- Get some sunshine – Get out on the sunny days and put a chair where the sun comes through the window so you sit there on the coldest days.
- Get plenty of sleep – rest is important for the immune system and remember that getting cold at night can disturb our sleep so make sure there are enough quilts on the bed.

### What should we be eating?

- Warming foods are best - think slow cooked stews or casseroles or things cooked slowly in the oven like roasts.
- Remember lots of vegetables are important for the digestion and the immune system: carrots, silverbeet, turnips, beans, beetroot, broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage.
- Fruit is important in winter too: lemons and mandarins are in season and apples or pears are great stewed with some cinnamon or nutmeg!
- Garlic and onions are great to boost the immune system or try some ginger tea.