

**HOME REMEDY**  
Chicken-noodle soup does more than relieve the sniffles.



## Don't Get Sick!

What to eat and drink to avoid getting sidelined by common winter woes BY LESLIE GOLDMAN

**W**INTER PRESENTS a number of training obstacles for runners. Shorter, darker days and icy roads can freeze training in its tracks, while a storm of season-specific health problems—including cold fingers and toes, stiff, achy joints, and even seasonal depression—can leave you wanting to skip your run altogether. Luckily, making certain foods and drinks a regular part of your diet can help you avoid common winter problems, says David Grotto, R.D., author of *101 Optimal Life Foods*. So before a winter woe sidelines you from yet another workout, try these consumable prescriptions for staying healthy—and running strong—all season long.

### COLD HANDS AND FEET

Ever return from a run and notice your fingers and toes have turned ghostly blue-white? You may have Raynaud's disease, a circulatory disorder that limits blood supply to your extremities and can be exacerbated by cold temperatures. Even if you're not among the five percent of Americans with Raynaud's, no runner is totally immune to frosty digits.

**FOOD FIX** → The amino acid arginine helps expand blood vessels and encourages blood flow, Grotto says. Arginine is found in protein-rich foods, including lean meat, poultry, and fish, as well as cashews, almonds, and peanuts, plus cereal grains, such as oats and barley. Tea, wine, cocoa, and chocolate can also help: They're rich in catechins, tannins, and other bioflavonoid compounds that help improve circulation.

### STIFF, ACHY JOINTS

A 2007 Tufts University study found arthritis pain increases incrementally for every 10°F drop in temperature. Even those without arthritis often notice a spike in stiff or achy joints during winter.

**FOOD FIX** → Anti-inflammatory omega-3s, found in abundance in such fatty fish as salmon, help reduce joint inflammation and even soothe exercise-induced muscle soreness. Omega-3s are so effective that in one study nearly 60 percent of neck- and back-pain patients taking fish-oil supplements were able to stop using NSAID pain relievers like



ibuprofen. Barbara Lewin, R.D., a sports nutritionist who works with runners, recommends also reducing intake of omega-6 fatty acids (found in corn oil and red meat), as they can actually promote inflammation.

### SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER

Seasonal Affective Disorder (or SAD) is a type of depression that typically emerges in winter, when a decrease in sunlight causes a dip in our levels of serotonin, the brain's natural "feel-good" chemical.

**FOOD FIX** → Judith Wurtman, Ph.D., coauthor of *The Serotonin Power Diet*, explains that eating small doses of carbs (about 25 to 30 grams, or 120 calories' worth) will help your brain produce

**ROAD TO RECOVERY**  
Chicken soup, salmon, and nuts can keep you on a healthy track.

serotonin. Consume the carbs without other foods (make sure your snack has no more than two or three grams of protein, which prevents serotonin production) and on a nearly empty stomach. Doing so will banish that SAD feeling within 20 minutes. Try an English muffin or half a bagel with jam, low-fat popcorn, pretzels, or even a sweetened breakfast cereal.

### THE COMMON COLD

Most adults will catch two to three colds per year. The highly contagious virus strikes more frequently in the fall and winter seasons, when we spend more time with people indoors.

**FOOD FIX** → Grandma's chicken-noodle soup: Research from the University of Nebraska Medical Center found that chicken soup has anti-inflammatory effects that ease symptoms of upper-respiratory-tract infections. The warm broth soothes throats, carrots provide beta-carotene (which is linked with immunity), and onions and garlic have antibacterial properties. Boost your

stay-healthy odds with a daily cup of yogurt or kefir. A study published in 2008 in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* revealed that long-distance runners who consumed the probiotic lactobacillus (found in yogurt and kefir) had shorter and less-severe bouts of respiratory illness than those who took a placebo.

### DRY SKIN

Running in cold and windy winter air, which is often low in humidity, pulls moisture out of your skin. Add to that dry, indoor heating, and it's no wonder your face, hands, elbows, and other sensitive spots end up flaky, cracked, and irritated.

**FOOD FIX** → Research shows that essential fatty acids found in salmon, flaxseeds, walnuts, and olive oil can help skin cells stay hydrated. In fact, a study published in 2009 in the *British Journal of Nutrition* found that participants who took flaxseed- or borage-oil supplements for three months had a significant increase in skin moisture and a reduction in roughness. Grotto also encourages runners to get plenty of ACES—his acronym for vitamins A, C, E, and selenium. "They're all antioxidants that help heal our skin from the inside out." ❧

## Winter Power Foods

Boost your chances of staying healthy with these nutrient-packed picks

### Dairy

Most milk, yogurt, and cheese contains vitamin D and calcium. These nutrients work together to prevent bone loss.



### Slow-cooked stews

Made with lean beef, postrun stews provide iron needed for red blood cell production.



### Green tea

A mug will warm you up postrun—plus, research shows EGCG (a compound in green tea) has anticancer properties that may prevent skin-tumor growth.



### Canned tuna

It's a good source of vitamin D, important in the winter when less sun exposure decreases our body's ability to produce it.



### Barley

This chewy grain (perfect for soups and stews) is high in cholesterol-lowering fiber and selenium, which reduces free-radical damage.



### Winter squash

Sharpen your eyesight for dark months with vitamin A superstars, such as pumpkin and butternut squash.



### Onions and garlic

These bulbs provide a boost of flavor along with antimicrobial properties, which may help protect you from winter bugs.



### Kale

In season in early winter, this leafy green delivers a megadose of vitamin K, which helps maintain strong bones and form blood clots.



### Baked potatoes

White spuds are high in vitamin C, while sweet potatoes are rich in vitamin A—two antioxidants that help protect your immune system.



### Citrus

Oranges, grapefruits, and other types of citrus fruits (at their peak in the winter months) are high in fiber and immune-boosting vitamin C.

