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Warning: Cold weather is a bigger threat to your health than heat

Take these three simple precautions to stay safe and sound this winter

This past June, July, and August were the hottest summer months recorded in the northern hemisphere, according to data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.[1]

So it's not surprising that we heard a feverish amount of advice from public health authorities about how to protect ourselves as the temperatures rose.

But now, as temperatures drop, is when they really need to issue caution. Because when it comes to our health and safety, it's actually *cold weather* that's responsible for almost *all* temperature-related deaths.

In a moment, I'll tell you three simple steps you can take to protect yourself from the hazards of cold weather. But first, let's take a closer look at how cooler temperatures affect our health…

Deadly cold

A new study by researchers with the University of Illinois at Chicago found that cold temperatures were responsible for *94 percent* of temperature-related deaths.

Researchers looked at both inpatient hospitalizations and outpatient visits to hospital urgent care units for temperature-related problems in Illinois between 2011 and 2018.[2]

They found there was almost an equal amount of cold-related and heat-related cases—23,834 and 24,233, respectively. *But* there were 1,935 deaths due to cold weather and only 70 deaths related to heat. Notably, people over the age of 65 and Black people were twice as likely to be hospitalized for temperature-related reasons.

People who had heart disease, kidney failure, or dehydration and electrolyte imbalances were also more commonly hospitalized—which may explain why older and Black people were more affected, since they can be more prone to these conditions.

The study also pointed out that Chicago has had a decrease in the number of extreme cold-weather days during the last several decades—but doctors still see far more deaths resulting from cold (rather than hot) weather.

To understand why, it's helpful to know how the body naturally acclimates to temperature changes…

Natural thermostats

There are many physiological adjustments the body makes to keep its internal temperature at or around 98.6 degrees, even when outside temperatures rise and fall, like an internal thermostat. (This is called "thermoregulation.")

These adjustments occur naturally during gradual seasonal shifts, like in the spring and fall. But the body can also make many short-term adjustments when subjected to daily heat and cold cycles, or when simply going outdoors during extreme weather.

Of course, thermoregulation is poorer when people don't have time to acclimate to the extreme heat or cold. And that's when problems set in. Plus, people who are regularly exposed to lower temperatures are better able to resist hypothermia.

Hypothermia occurs when the body's core temperature drops to 95 degrees or lower. People who have hypothermia have trouble naturally

In this issue:

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thermoregulating—making them more susceptible to temperature-related health issues.

For instance, the Chicago study found that hypothermia due to cold was responsible for 27 percent of hospital visits due to extreme temperatures.

Why hypothermia is so dangerous

As a forensic pathologist serving as an expert witness for maritime law proceedings, I once investigated deaths that had occurred in the ocean—both in northern and southern waters.

I quickly discovered that deaths from exposure, or hypothermia, in the water are more common than drowning. That's because any body of water that's colder than the normal human body temperature has the potential of conducting heat away from the body and beginning the progression of hypothermia.

When water temperatures are in the 80s, people can typically continue to generate sufficient body heat to avoid hypothermia. But when temperatures drop into the 60s and 70s, hypothermia begins to set in, and death can occur in as little as four hours.

Your fate only gets worse as temperatures continue to drop—and hypothermia and a loss of consciousness set in more rapidly.

But you don't even have to get wet for hypothermia to occur. Hospital doctors observe that even mildly cool outside air temperatures can also initiate it.

Interestingly, hypothermia is actually the body's way of protecting itself from cold—at least for a little while. When a person first experiences hypothermia, his or her blood and energy flow contracts to the core of the body to conserve heat. Then, vital organs and systems begin to shut down in order to maintain the brain.

Unfortunately, once this hypothermia process has begun, it's difficult to reverse—which is why it's so deadly.

Sweating out the details

By contrast, heat-related problems are far more likely to resolve by simply getting to a cooler space and drinking water. In fact, as long as the body is hydrated, it has the ability to cool off by sweating.

Sweating also uses the heat-conductive properties of water in reverse. When sweat forms, it takes heat out of the body. Then, the sweat evaporates into the air, turning into a vapor state—a thermodynamic transition that takes a lot of heat energy away from the body.

But it's important to note that since sweat carries some salts (electrolytes) out of the body, proper hydration means replenishing with water *and* electrolytes.

Of course, when the air is more humid, evaporation of sweat is less efficient, since the atmosphere is already laden with moisture. That's why it's easier to cool down in dryer climates.

My three steps to stay healthy and safe this winter

Even though the process of how cold and heat affects our bodies is complicated, there are some surprisingly simple steps you can take to stay safe and healthy as the temperatures drop…

1.) Stay warm. This is especially important if you live in a climate where it doesn't get too cold very often. As I mentioned earlier, if you spend most of your time in warm climates, your body doesn't have as much practice making the adjustments that protect your core temperature, which can make you more susceptible to hypothermia—

and even death.

So bundle up when the temperature drops. Protect your core with a jacket or heavy vest. Keep heat from escaping from your head with a warm, close-fitting hat. And protect your vulnerable extremities with gloves, socks, and warm shoes or boots.

2.) Stay dry. Getting drenched by rain or snow doesn't make you more susceptible to colds. But it *does* make you more susceptible to hypothermia. So if you do get wet when the temperatures are low, get into a warm room and dry off as soon as you can.

3.) Stay hydrated. This is the step that may seem counterintuitive, since we tend to think more about drinking water when the temperatures rise. But hydration is important no matter what the thermometer reads. And we can often be less aware we're dehydrated when the weather is cooler.

Plus, both indoor and outdoor air during the winter can actually draw moisture from our bodies.

Heating systems bake the humidity out of indoor air. So when you breathe it in, your lungs get dry—and consequently, transfer moisture from your body. And cold, outdoor air has a reduced ability to hold humidity—creating the same effect.

So make sure to drink plenty of water in winter. Even better, add some powdered rooibos extract to your water. This South African plant helps keep your body hydrated at the cellular level. And, when combined with other botanicals like blueberries and rose hips, rooibos offers even more support.

Bottom line: Don't fall victim to the cold this winter. Stay warm, dry, and hydrated to protect your health—both inside and outside. JC

New study shows popular osteoporosis drugs can actually *increase* bone fractures

Here's my 4-step plan to strengthen your bones naturally and effectively

As cold, snowy, and icy weather descends on most of North America and Europe, it's once again "slip and fall" season. And for older people with osteoporosis, even a minor fall can result in a major fracture.

Osteoporosis weakens bones, making them more likely to break. Ironically, the drugs that are typically prescribed for osteoporosis can do the same thing (rather than help prevent it).

In fact, a new study found that taking bisphosphonate drugs like Risedronic acid, Alendronic acid, Ibandronic acid, or Zoledronic acid for as little as three years can substantially increase your risk of serious leg fractures. (These types of drugs include Actonel®, Fosomax®, Boniva®, or Reclast®.)

In a moment, I'll reveal the details of this important new study—and how you can protect against osteoporosis and bone fractures naturally *and* effectively. But first, I'd like to explain why bisphosphonate drugs are so dangerous…and unnecessary.

How big pharma ignores the basic biology of bones

Years ago, I revealed the problems with bisphosphonate drugs. It all has to do with two types of bone cells, which are at work in our bodies at all times—osteoclasts and osteoblasts.

The bones are living tissues that rely on osteoclasts to remove old, weak bone cells. Then, osteoblasts lay down new bone cells. Both osteoclasts and osteoblasts need to be nourished and kept in balance in order to maintain strong, healthy bones and prevent osteoporosis.

Yet somehow, big pharma got the "brilliant" and sophomoric idea to create bisphosphonate drugs that actually *poison* the osteoclasts. But without osteoclasts, your body is no longer able to remove the old, weak bone cells—so healthy bone cells are just laid down on top of unhealthy bone cells.

That's like trying to build a brand new house on top of a rotten foundation. Just as you would expect that house to develop cracks over time, your bones are more prone to fractures when you take bisphosphonate drugs.

Which leads me to the new study—presented in September at the American Society for Bone and Mineral Research's annual meeting.[1]

A 58 percent chance of serious leg fractures

Between 2010 and 2015, researchers identified nearly 5,000 leg fractures among Danish men and women older than 50 years. Nearly 200 of those people had a serious type of bone break called an atypical femoral fracture (AFF).

The researchers found that 58 percent of AFFs occurred in people taking bisphosphonates. And the risk of AFFs increased after three to five years of taking these drugs. Not surprisingly, the risk quickly dropped after people stopped taking bisphosphonates.

The researchers also cited a prior study showing that 78 percent of AFFs occur in people who take bisphosphonates. In addition, another study found that a whopping 94 percent of AFFs were associated with bisphosphonate use. (These studies also showed that taking steroids, proton pump inhibitors, statins, and other drugs increase the risk of AFFs. Just another reason to stay away from prescription drugs whenever possible.)

But since the new study found that "only" 58 percent of AAFs were caused by bisphosphonates, the researchers concluded that people could take these terrible and useless drugs for three to five years without adverse effects.

But if older patients with osteoporosis take bisphosphonates for that many years, what's going to make them stop? They will just be three to five years older and will still suffer from osteoporosis, since these drugs certainly don't cure (or even help) the condition.

Bone up on bone health

Prescription-happy doctors, along with the government's faulty dietary recommendations, are big factors in our current epidemic of osteoporosis. But you *don't* have to be a victim.

Instead, follow my four-step, all-natural plan to help effectively prevent osteoporosis and fractures:

1.) Eat a healthy, balanced diet with plenty of organic, full-fat dairy, eggs, fish, and meat. These foods are excellent sources of calcium and magnesium, which are essential for healthy bones. (As I often report, you should always get your calcium from your diet rather than supplements. That's because it's nearly impossible to get a meaningful dose from a supplement.)

2.) Cut out sugar and simple carbohydrates. Sugar reduces the number of osteoblasts that help rebuild your bones. Plus, it can deplete your body's calcium and magnesium stores.

3.) Take 10,000 IU per day of vitamin D, which, along with calcium, helps build strong bones.

4.) Engage in moderate exercise totaling 140 minutes per week. Research shows this is an ideal amount for optimal bone health. You can try walking, hiking, gardening, or swimming.

And, of course, take precautions when walking on icy surfaces. Choose shoes with no-slip soles, move slowly and carefully, and consider using a walking aid like ski poles or a rubber-tipped cane. IC

Pumpkin spice is more than just a flavor

It's still the time of year for "pumpkin spice" lattes and treats. Indeed, they are just about everywhere you turn. But when you look at the horrific list of fake ingredients in so-called pumpkin-spice coffee concoctions from big commercial chains, you'll see it's *far healthier* to sprinkle the single spices that make up that pumpkin spice flavor directly into your home-brewed coffee for a seasonal treat instead.

There are five spices that typically make up a pumpkin spice blend: allspice, cinnamon, cloves, ginger, and nutmeg. But these spices actually have nothing to do with pumpkins, botanically. They're simply used to give some "spice" to the otherwise bland (but healthy) taste of pumpkins.

Of course, these five popular spices have many other roles as well. I even like to add them to one of my favorite holiday drinks—George Washington's Original Eggnog (see the sidebar on page 5 for the recipe).

But these holiday spices don't just taste good, they each have a storied culture and history as botanical remedies. Let's take a closer look…

The five spices behind that pumpkin-spice flavor

1.) Allspice is widely used in cooking throughout the Caribbean, Mexico, and Central America. You make it by grinding dried, unripe berries from the native pimento tree.

Like other holiday spices, allspice contains compounds that reduce inflammation and help stimulate digestion. It's also loaded with important minerals like potassium, manganese, iron, copper, selenium, and magnesium.

2.) Cinnamon blocks inflammation-promoting compounds in the body, including unhealthy fat metabolites and toxic biochemicals.

Studies show that the best-known variety, called *Cassia* cinnamon, thins the blood, helps prevent blood clots, and controls blood sugar. However,

if you take a blood-thinner drug, you should use the other variety of cinnamon called *Ceylon*. It will give you the anti-inflammatory benefits without potential drug interaction side effects.

3.) Cloves improve digestion by stimulating the secretion of digestive enzymes. They also help reduce flatulence, gastric irritability, dyspepsia, and nausea. Some research suggests they even help control blood sugar levels.

You can roast cloves and eat them with honey. Clove oil is also great for toothaches and removing skin growths.

4.) Ginger is part of the same botanical family as the powerhouse remedy turmeric. For 3,000 years, the Chinese have used ginger to treat stomach upset, diarrhea, nausea, and pain. (No wonder ginger is so prominent in Asian cooking!)

In the West, we have our own ginger remedies. When you were a child, did your mother or grandmother ever give you a glass of ginger ale to settle your upset stomach? That might not have been a bad idea back in the day, when it actually contained real ginger. But nowadays, most options on the market contain artificial ginger flavoring.

You can make your own ginger ale or ginger tea by adding a few slices of fresh ginger root to sparkling or hot water. In fact, I recommend always keeping a fresh, whole tuber of ginger on hand in your refrigerator. A slice or two is a great way to "spice up" everything from stir fries to baked goods.

5.) Nutmeg, like many of the other spices on this list, helps reduce inflammation. In fact, research shows nutmeg oil slows the production of COX-2, which is the same way ibuprofen and some other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs work.

Nutmeg tea also eases digestive discomfort. But beware, some research suggest that nutmeg at high doses can cause hallucinations. Also, pregnant or nursing women and infants shouldn't take it.

So go ahead and use these spices liberally in your baking and cooking this holiday season. They'll add flavor to your foods and offer some impressive medicinal benefits as well. IC

George Washington's Original Eggnog

America's first president was fond of eggnog at Christmastime. I recently came across George Washington's original recipe for the libation in The Old Farmers' Almanac—written down for posterity by the man himself sometime between 1789 and his death just before Christmas in 1799.[1]

The recipe is not only festive, but it's also a small glimpse into Washington's writing and thinking. Here it is, in his own words:

"One quart cream, one quart milk, one dozen tablespoons sugar, one pint brandy, 1/2 pint rye whiskey, 1/2 pint Jamaica rum, 1/4 pint sherry—mix liquor first, then separate yolks and whites of 12 eggs, add sugar to beaten yolks, mix well. Add milk and cream, slowly beating. Beat whites of eggs until stiff and fold slowly into mixture. Let set in cool place for several days. Taste frequently."

Of course, Washington used organic cane sugar, and you can certainly ease up on that ingredient to taste. I also like to sprinkle the five holiday spices into the mix. They're a no-calorie way to add even more flavor to this seasonal libation.

Fair warning: You'll certainly be feeling the Christmas "spirit" with this recipe! But it makes sense that Washington was perhaps a bit heavy-handed with the booze. Among his other agrarian pursuits, Washington distilled, bottled, and sold his own liquor at Mount Vernon, Virginia—which was home for 45 years. Today, Mount Vernon sells rye whiskey distilled on the estate using the president's own recipe.

The one diet that provides health benefits all around the world

You may be concerned about putting on a few extra pounds during the holidays. After all, not only can overindulging in Bûche de Noël and George Washington's eggnog (see sidebar above) affect your waistline, but it can also impact your health.

Indeed, there's plenty of evidence showing that being overweight or obese can shorten your lifespan. Case in point: A meta-analysis published in 2017 found that excess weight contributes to *4 million deaths* per year worldwide.[1]

But, as I've written before, a few extra pounds isn't always a bad thing. In fact, when it comes to good health, the *quality* of your diet can be more important than the *quantity* of your diet.

And now, a new study shows that a healthy, Mediterranean-style diet can actually counter the ill effects of excess weight on your lifespan.

So, let's take a closer look at the findings of that study from Sweden.

And from there, I'll take you on a short tour around the world to illustrate the real benefits of a healthy diet—and what really counts (and doesn't count) as being *truly* healthy.

From Sweden: The benefits of following a Mediterranean diet

The new study involved nearly 80,000 Swedish men and women with an average age of 61.[2] Researchers followed this group for 21 years, analyzing how their diets affected their health and longevity.

During the study period, 38 percent of the participants died. (That's not surprising, considering most were in their 80s when the study ended.)

What *was* surprising is that the people who were obese—but who ate a Mediterranean-style diet rich in fruits, vegetables, legumes, fish, meat, olive oil, and whole grains—were no more likely to die than normal-weight people who also followed a Mediterranean diet. And this includes deaths from cardiovascular disease, the world's No. 1 killer.

Even more amazingly, overweight people who most closely adhered to a Mediterranean diet had up to a 10 percent lower risk of death from any cause compared to people of normal weight.

And people of normal weight who *didn't* eat a Mediterranean-style diet had up to a *75 percent higher mortality rate* compared with normal-weight people who had a high adherence to a Medi diet pattern.

In other words, the benefits of a healthy Mediterranean diet completely outweighed, so to speak, any ill effects of a high body mass index (BMI) for total mortality.

Of course, the problem is that not everybody follows a healthy Medi diet—not even Mediterraneans…

From Greece: The perils of an unbalanced diet

One of the main reasons the Mediterranean diet is so healthy is because it's *balanced*. Remember, this diet is full of fresh fruits and vegetables, seeds and nuts, legumes, grass-fed and -finished meat, wild-caught fish and seafood, full-fat dairy (like milk, butter, yogurt, and cheeses), eggs, olives and olive oil, and alcohol in moderation.

Or, as the Greeks say: *pantophagus*—eating all kinds of foods.

And, as such, it contains a variety of ingredients that provide the building blocks of life—protein, fat, carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals, and many other nutrients.

As I've written before, the definition of an unhealthy, unbalanced diet is one that eliminates entire categories of foods and nutrients. And one of the most common examples of this is vegetarian diets.

A new study from Greece is a stark reminder of the dangers of this type of unbalanced diet. (The irony is not lost on me here—that even in Greece, the historic ancient center of the Mediterranean, there are people who reject their sensible, traditional, healthy diet that surrounds them, and instead succumb to contemporary, politically correct nonsense like vegetarian diets.)

For 10 years, a team of researchers at Harokopio University in Athens assessed the diets of nearly 150 obese men and women.[3]

The researchers sorted the participants into two groups: vegetarians and non-vegetarians. The vegetarian group was then divided into two categories: those who ate more healthy foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, legumes, and olive oil; or those who ate more unhealthy foods like juice, sweetened beverages, refined grains, potatoes, and sugary desserts.

All of the participants had normal blood pressure, blood sugar, and fat levels, and didn't have heart disease at the start of the study. But by the end of the study, nearly *half* of the participants had developed high blood pressure and high blood sugar, and were at increased risk of heart disease.

These findings were stronger in women than in men. Perhaps because prior studies show that women typically tend to eat more plant-based foods than men.

The main takeaway from this study is that vegetarian diets are indiscriminately considered "healthy," even when they include foods loaded with refined carbs and sugar. But this study highlights the poor quality of many plant-based foods and diets (including plant-based fake "meats" that are highly processed and loaded with unhealthy ingredients).

One reason why so-called "healthy" vegetarians eat such an unhealthy diet may be because avoiding meat makes more room for highly processed carbohydrates and sugars—which are the *real* culprits behind poor health.

So even if you want to reduce meat consumption—for personal or health reasons—it's key to eat eggs, fish, nuts, and seeds to lower blood pressure and manage blood sugar, blood fats, and insulin.

Because when you eliminate whole categories of food (like meat) from your diet, you end up with a difficult metabolic balancing act. One that can seriously affect your health, as illustrated by this study.

Of course, if people in Greece can fall prey to fake, unbalanced diets, we *all* need to put up our guard. Which leads me to the final chapter in our worldwide saga of unhealthy diets…

From Australia: An extreme consequence of an extreme diet

Australia is home to a large Mediterranean population. In fact, I found that the best restaurants in Australia were Greek, Italian, and Spanish—including Capitan Torres Spanish Restaurant on Darling Harbour in Sydney (named after Luis Váez de Torres, a 16th- and 17th-century explorer who reportedly was the first European to navigate the waters that separate Australia from New Guinea...now called the Torres Strait).

The largest Greek community in the world, outside of Greece itself, is in Melbourne, Australia. But it seems the Mediterranean diet has tragically eluded plenty of its residents.

Case in point: In March 2018, a 19-month-old girl suffered a seizure and was rushed to a Melbourne hospital.[4] She had bruising, skin discoloration, rashes, and open wounds (signs of vitamin deficiency). She didn't have any teeth and weighed only 11 pounds.

The toddler was diagnosed with cerebral palsy brought on by malnutrition. Doctors commented that the child's condition was similar to newborns who experience famine in third-world countries.

But this little girl's malnutrition wasn't the result of starvation. Instead, it was due to one of the most extreme, unbalanced diets—veganism.

The parents, who are strict vegans, were arrested for failing to provide for their child. They told the court they couldn't find an "appropriate" vegan baby formula, so the father made his own from dates, fruits, and vegetables. When the baby graduated to solid food, she was fed a diet of oats, potatoes, rice, tofu, bread, peanut butter, and rice milk. She occasionally snacked on fruit and raisins.

The parents were sentenced to 18 months of work release. They also received a scolding from the judge. "It is the responsibility of every parent to ensure the diet they chose to provide to their children...is one that is balanced and contains sufficient essential nutrients and vitamins for optimum growth and development," the judge said.

The moral of this terrible tale is that—yet again—the dangers of an unbalanced diet are not just child's play…in fact, they are definitely not for children at all.

To go back to the point I made earlier, this is an extreme example of what happens when someone eats a poor diet—and cuts out whole categories of foods, like meat and full-fat dairy. It sounds like the parents fed their child the right *quantity* of food, but far from the right *quality* of food.

So, to bring things back full circle, I'll leave you with this piece of advice: This holiday season (and every other time of the year), don't obsess about the potential of putting on a few extra pounds.

Instead, simply try to refrain from overindulging too frequently—and focus on eating a nutritious, balanced, Mediterranean-style diet that will keep you healthy for years to come. JC

Research reveals a new risk factor for diabetes

Plus, five simple steps to help keep blood sugar in check

We like to say the holidays are the "most wonderful time of year." But in reality, the holidays aren't all glitter and mistletoe. There are high expectations, hectic schedules, and perhaps grim reminders of long-gone, happier holidays with loved ones who are no longer with us.

Add in the declining daylight of December, the holidays can be rife with opportunities for sadness and loneliness—especially this year, with the coronavirus pandemic, social isolation, disruptions, and unprecedented economic and societal shut-downs still looming.

Of course, it's important to note that loneliness has been well-documented as a major risk factor for heart disease and death. In fact, studies show that lonely people are 22 percent more likely to die prematurely.[1]

And now, new research links loneliness to a substantially higher risk of developing Type II diabetes.

Diabetes risk can skyrocket up to 84 percent

The study tracked 4,112 English men and women, with an average age of 65, for 12 years.[2] None of the participants had diabetes at the beginning of the study, but by the end of the study, 264 people had developed the disease.

Researchers assessed the participants' loneliness using the UCLA Loneliness Scale—which asks questions like "how often do you feel you lack companionship: hardly ever/never, some of the time, or often"?

The researchers also considered participants' age, ethnicity, gender,

physical activity, and socioeconomic status. And they screened for diabetes risk factors such as excessive alcohol consumption, high body mass index (BMI), heart disease, and high blood pressure.

Even after taking all of these factors into account, the researchers found that *loneliness* can increase the risk of being diagnosed with Type II diabetes by a whopping 46 to 84 percent!

But there is some good news… especially in the age of coronavirus. The researchers found that living alone, social isolation, or depression, specifically, *weren't* significant risk factors for diabetes.

In my view, this shows that loneliness is a subjective feeling that more closely relates to the *quality* of social relationships rather than the quantity—or proximity.

After all, it's possible to feel lonely even when you're surrounded by people, as first discussed in one of my favorite books, the classic post-World War II sociological study, *The Lonely Crowd.*

Four steps to reduce loneliness

The researchers had several theories for why loneliness is such a big risk factor for diabetes.

For one, they noted that previous research had found that lonely people can have disturbances in their cortisol production. And too much of this stress hormone has been linked to diabetes and a whole host of other diseases.

Plus, some studies have found that loneliness can result in increased inflammation—another major culprit in chronic diseases like Type II diabetes.

Of course, occasional feelings of loneliness aren't likely to bring on these metabolic changes. But if you're feeling particularly lonely this holiday season—or any other time—there are effective, natural remedies.

In the September issue of *Insiders' Cures,* I wrote about my four simple steps to combat loneliness:

1.) Have regular conversations (in person, by video, or by phone) with friends, family members, and even strangers.

2.) Share your wisdom during those conversations. This not only helps *you* feel valuable, but can also be useful for the people you're talking with.

3.) Try some new, creative pursuits. This opens the door to other avenues to connect with like-minded people.

4.) Get out in Nature. Study after study shows that the great outdoors has mental, emotional, and physical health benefits, as I regularly report.

This month, I'd like to add a fifth item to this list…

A good reason to get into hot water

A new study evaluated the effects of a popular group activity that can ease loneliness and offer direct benefits for diabetes, blood sugar, and blood pressure: tub bathing.[3]

Researchers from Japan conducted the first study on whether regularly soaking in hot water has an impact on risk factors for diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

The study involved 1,197 men and women with Type II diabetes. Participants were split into three groups according to their frequency of hot bathing: more than four times per week (693 people); one to four times per week (415 people); and less than once a week (189 people).

After six months of this bathing regimen, the researchers found that body weight, BMI, waist circumference, blood pressure, and blood sugar were all significantly better in the group that bathed the most compared with the group that bathed the least.

The mean frequency of hot tub bathing among all participants in the study was 4.2 times a week, for 16 minutes a session.

In other words, simply taking a hot bath or jumping into a hot tub, steam bath, or sauna on just a semi-regular basis can substantially slash your diabetes risk factors.

The social benefits of hot tubbing

The Japanese researchers pointed out that other studies show that heat stimulation can increase insulin sensitivity and enhance energy expenditure—whether you're sitting in a hot tub or sweating through a workout.

But I also wonder if the social aspect of hot tub bathing with others also has an effect. After all, it's difficult to feel lonely when you're relaxing shoulder-to-shoulder with those you are close to!

Of course, before you jump into a communal hot tub, check with your local authorities regarding restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic.

And in the meantime, take advantage of relaxing, hot baths in the comfort of your own home. You can even listen to some mindfulness meditation or music to help combat any feelings of loneliness while doing so! IC

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