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Winter Nutrition Tips for Better Health



January is the perfect time to reset your habits. With colder weather, shorter days and seasonal bugs about, a few smart nutrition choices can support your immunity, mood and bone health so you feel your best all winter long.

1) Support Your Immune System in Winter

There's no single food that "supercharges" immunity, but a balanced, varied diet rich in vitamins, minerals, fibre and healthy fats helps your immune system work at its best. Good sleep, regular activity and stress management matter too.

Nutrients to include regularly:

- **Vitamins A, C, D & E plus zinc, iron and selenium** from a wide range of whole foods.
- **Oily fish** (e.g., salmon, mackerel, sardines) for vitamin D and omega-3; aim for at least **2 portions of fish a week, including 1 oily.**
- **Live yoghurt or kefir, beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, and plenty of colourful fruit and veg** to provide fibre and protective antioxidants.

Everyday habit ideas:

add berries to porridge, toss chickpeas into soups, keep mixed nuts for snacks, and plan an oily fish supper once a week.





2) Lift Your Mood in the Darker Months

If lower light makes you feel flat, you're not alone. Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that follows a seasonal pattern, often linked with reduced winter sunlight affecting serotonin, melatonin and the body clock. Nutrition can help as part of a broader self-care plan.

Nutrition tips for mood:

- Choose **complex carbohydrates** (whole grains, potatoes with skin, beans) to provide steady energy; irregular eating can sap concentration and mood.
- Include **protein** at meals (fish, eggs, poultry, tofu, pulses); it provides **tryptophan**, a building block for serotonin (diet alone won't "spike" serotonin, but adequate protein supports availability).
- Get **omega-3s** from oily fish, walnuts, chia or flax. Evidence for depression is mixed overall, with some data suggesting benefit (especially EPA), while other studies show little effect; food sources remain a sound choice for general health.
- Ensure **vitamin D** adequacy; low winter sunlight makes deficiency more likely.

If low mood persists or you think you might have SAD, speak to a Clinician

3) Protect Your Bones: Vitamin D & Calcium

Vitamin D helps your body absorb calcium and keep bones, teeth and muscles healthy. In the UK, **we do not make enough vitamin D from sunlight between October and early March**. Government advice is that **everyone should consider a daily 10 microgram (400 IU) vitamin D supplement during autumn and winter**.

Food sources of vitamin D:

- Oily fish (salmon, mackerel, sardines, herring) and egg yolks; some cereals and plant milks are fortified.
- UV-exposed mushrooms can also provide vitamin D (check the label).

Calcium-rich choices: milk, yoghurt, cheese, calcium-set tofu, canned fish with edible bones (e.g., sardines), and dark green veg. Pair vitamin D with calcium-rich foods to support bone health.

Important:

Always check with a healthcare professional before starting supplements if you have a medical condition or take other medicines.





4) Your Winter Wellness Shopping List

Add a selection of these to your weekly shop to cover key nutrients:

- **Vitamin A:** carrots, sweet potato, spinach, eggs, red peppers.
- **Vitamin C:** citrus, berries, broccoli, peppers, Brussels sprouts.
- **Vitamin D:** oily fish, egg yolks, fortified cereals/plant milks, UV mushrooms.
- **Vitamin E:** plant oils, nuts, seeds, wheatgerm.
- **Iron:** lean red meat, beans, lentils, dark leafy greens, wholegrains.
- **Zinc & Selenium:** shellfish, eggs, nuts and seeds (Brazil nuts for selenium).
- **Omega-3:** salmon, mackerel, sardines; plant sources include chia, flax, walnuts.
- **Calcium:** dairy, fortified alternatives, tofu, canned sardines/pilchards, greens.

5) Simple Weekly Meal Starters

- **Breakfasts:** porridge + berries; wholegrain toast + eggs; yoghurt + nuts & seeds.
- **Lunches:** lentil & veg soup; wholegrain wrap with salmon, salad & yoghurt dressing.
- **Dinners:** baked mackerel, sweet potato & greens; tofu & veg stir-fry with brown rice.

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