

CARE TIPS FOR THE CHANGE OF SEASONS

The change of seasons brings along a change in the indoor and outdoor environment we live, sleep, work and socialise in. Outdoors can present wind that can lower temperatures and dry air spaces, and the artificial environment we live in are cooled and heated often moving from one extreme temperature to the next. All of these things can increase the drying of our skin, eyes and mouth and increase the potential for symptom exacerbation. Think about your illness and the symptoms you have and introduce strategies that help to ward off and or alleviate their impact. Here are a few facts and tips to consider:

- Dehydration can happen quickly in dry environments. Whilst warmth is needed for combatting Raynaud's as well as joint and muscular pain consider that heating can zap the moisture from the air. Try enhancing the effectiveness of heating by increasing the layers of clothing and changing the fabric worn in clothes to include natural fibres that provide greater warmth. Make sure your core is kept warm as well as your extremities by wearing vests, gloves and hats.
- Use a humidifier to put some moisture in your environment. This helps to reduce the amount of moisture lost from the skin through evaporation and can also help with dry airways. Moisture can also be placed back into a room by placing an open dish of water near or in front of your heater. The water will need to be topped up overtime and be safe with electrics.
- Try to avoid sudden temperature changes indoors and keep your home warm rather than overheated. The Australian recommendation for winter comfort is between 22°C to 24°C.
- Keep up your hydration levels, despite the weather cooling and thirst subsiding. It is important to maintain good hydration which can be enhanced by consuming more liquid foods of soups and casseroles. Consider also warm low fat and caloric beverages.
- Pay attention to maintaining a healthy, varied and as natural as possible diet filled with vitamins, minerals and an adequate fibre supply for your nutrition needs.
- Limit your intake of junk or 'comfort foods' as these foods can increase your weight as well as aid in the dehydration of the body through salt and sugar levels.
- Be aware that excessive bathing using soaps and cleansers, hot rather than warm water and no replenishment of skin moisture through use of lubricants, moisturisers and oils can be detrimental to both skin and internal health. So limit the use of soaps and other chemicals and moisturise, moisturise, moisturise.
- The temptation is to use rough abrasive exfoliants on skin surface to combat dry flaky skin however this can irritate the skin surface further causing damage that can result in rash or infection. Using soft cloths and regularly stimulating the skin surface through gentle rubbing or massage can help to invigorate the skin and reduces risk of damage. Use a good quality moisturiser or some essential oils to help rehydrate the skin surface. For cracked, dry skin on the fingers, the use calendula cream, comfrey, argan or coconut oil, Aloe Vera can be helpful.
- Moisturising at night can have special benefits. Hands and feet can have a thicker more intensive moisturiser applied before going to sleep. Try applying the moisturiser as a final preparation before going to sleep. To increase the moisturising effect apply thickly and wear some cotton gloves and socks. Try applying on hands before putting on washing up gloves. The warmth of the water will intensify the effect.
- Keep any chapped areas protected from the elements, wear gloves, socks and shoes.
- Continue to wear a sunscreen lotion daily even in winter. This protects you from harmful UV radiation in the sunlight, whilst driving and from store and office lighting. It also helps prevent moisture loss.
- Maintain a healthy exercise regime but be aware to protect yourself from the elements. And if illness such as colds do occur the restart your exercise program slowly.
- Avoid immune boosting herbs such as Echinacea often found in cough mixtures and cold/flu medications these are not useful at all.
- Seek advice from your medical team regarding the need for updating vaccinations in particular, the flu vaccine. In most case of people with Autoimmune illness the flu vax is recommended as a preventative measure, however seek advice from your doctor as each individual has individual reactions, precautions and needs.