

Adult Day Self-Care Newsletter

December 2023

Winter Wellness

Wellness is an important topic for everyone—especially for the people who attend Adult Day Centers and other services for older adults who often have conditions that affect their mental and physical health. Older adults are especially at risk for physical health problems if exposed to respiratory illnesses like the flu, pneumonia, RSV, and COVID. This means that Adult Day Center staff need to guard themselves as well, so they are not bringing these illnesses to work. Many respiratory illnesses spike in the winter, so it's helpful to review how to prevent them. The winter months may stress our emotional well-being, too. Stress can affect our physical health and other aspects of wellness, such as our relationships, so self-care becomes extra important at this time of year!

Seasonal Changes in Health and Wellness

Research suggests daily, weekly, and seasonal variations in wellbeing.¹ Negative emotions such as depression, anger, and irritability increase in the winter, with this change being greater for men than women. Happiness is highest in July and lowest in January.¹ Depressive episodes peak in the winter.²

Sleep patterns also change with the seasons, with older adults sleeping more in the winter. This seasonal change tends to lessen, though, for people with mild cognitive impairment,³ suggesting a disruption in typical sleep patterns.

Some neurotransmitters in the brain show seasonal variations, as do some brain functions, such as attention and decision-making, which also vary across each day. Exposure to bright light may be one factor contributing to these shifts. Age and gender may be factors, too, with some studies suggesting that younger people are more sensitive to seasonal changes than older adults.

¹ Blanchflower, DG, & Bryson, A. (2023, Feb) Seasonality and the female happiness paradox. *Quality & Quantity*. Advance Online Publ.

² Zhage, R, & Volkow, ND. (2023). Seasonality of brain function: Role in psychiatric disorders. *Translational Psychiatry*, 13, 65.

³ Reynolds, C., et al. (2022). Association between mild cognitive impairment and seasonal rest-activity patterns of older adults. *Frontiers in Digital Health*, 4, 809370.



COPSA Adult Day Conference

Social Work in Adult Day Care: Practical Strategies, Resources, and Information for Success on the Job

December 8, 2023

9:30 to 3:30

Conference Center at RWJ Hamilton in the RWJ Fitness & Wellness Center

Registration and lunch are complimentary.

Click [HERE](#) to register.

Winter Self-Care

Self-care is doing things that contribute to your health and wellbeing, especially following regular habits and routines for positive health. Since our lives get complicated in the winter, due to weather challenges, changes in energy, and social commitments, it's best to plan ahead.

Think through how you will avoid illness by getting enough sleep, exercising regularly, and eating healthy foods. Indulgence is fine—a late night out with friends, a day on the couch, and a special dessert all contribute to life's pleasures. But what makes these special is that they are outside of your daily routines!

Remember the small things, too. Wash your hands often to reduce the spread of those pesky winter germs. Staying hydrated is a must, as the air is dryer indoors and out. Moisturizer helps protect your skin from cold, dry air.

Invest in a pair of anti-slip cleats or ice grippers that go over your boots. They're a lot less expensive than a broken bone!



Spend time outdoors when you can. Morning sun can boost your mood. A walk in the sun with a friend is even better, by combining the exercise, social connection, and fresh air. An added benefit of regular exercise is better sleep and well as more resistance to illness.

Take a pause for yourself to regroup and to refresh. A still and quiet moment or doing any activity mindfully (even doing the dishes or brushing your teeth) can help reduce stress. Search online for short guided meditations⁴ or take six minutes to check out the winter meditation from the [Denver Botanical Garden](#).

⁴ www.self-compassion.org or [UCLA Health](#) or [Insight Timer](#)

For More Information

Here are some additional references for this issue:

- Flu and pneumonia: www.nfid.org
- RSV: www.lung.org/
- COVID: www.ama-assn.org/
- [Enhancing Your Immune Health](#). This five-part education curriculum was designed for people in recovery from mental health conditions, but can be used by anyone wanting to understand and enhance their immune health.
- [Stay Safe in Cold Weather](#) (from NIA/NIH)

Care2Caregivers Website

You can find the [Adult Day Resources pages](#) on our website through the drop-down menu in the Professional Resources section.

As always, you can access the Self-Care resources on our website for free.

Self-Care for Professional Caregivers
<https://care2caregivers.com/professional-resources/self-care/>

Upcoming Caregiver Education

Winter Wellness for Caregivers

December 13, 2023, 1:00pm

Click [HERE](#) to register



Letting Go for Caregivers

January 17, 2024, 1:00pm

Click [HERE](#) to register

For more info email Mary Catherine:
lundqumc@ubhc.rutgers.edu
or call Care2Caregivers at 890-424-2494



visit our website www.care2caregivers.com for information on caregiver support groups

1-800-424-2494