A Prayer for The Season

Dear Jesus,
Please consider our family this Christmas. Consider granting us health and happiness and let your peace and your presence come to us, and grant us the joy of knowing you personally. Please touch us with healing, and let us experience the joy of Christmas with times of feeling strong and healthy. Please consider others who really need you. Consider those suffering, that they might have a better time this Christmas.
Thank you for all you have done, Amen.

Winter & Your Skin

Soft tender skin is the mortal enemy to the winter weather. One of the biggest concerns regarding winter and your skin is how much dryness can occur. Both the cold air from the outdoors and the blasting heat from indoors can dry out the skin. In order to prevent dry, cracking skin which can be painful, keep your skin extra moisturized with a heavy moisturizer or a petroleum jelly. Humidifiers also help with taking the dryness out of the air and can help prevent nosebleeds in people who are more susceptible. Also children should only bathe every few days in the winter as frequent hot baths can further dry out the skin. (Remember though to wash hands frequently as it is cold and flu season!)

Sunscreen is also a must during the winter season. Fallen snow is a perfect reflective surface for the Sun’s rays. Snow reflects more than 75% of the UV rays produced by the sun. That being said skin can still become sunburnt because of this reflection, just as bad as it can in the summer months.

Message from the H&W Team

The members of the St. Francis of Assisi Health and Wellness Committee, are wishing you and yours a very MERRY CHRISTMAS this holiday season! And wishing everyone warm wishes and urging everyone to stay safe during this festive time and year to come!

We are also reminding everyone we are ALWAYS recruiting for new members (no health related background needed!)

Dressing For Warmth

Winter weather brings below zero conditions, dressing warm is of huge importance over the winter months. Preventing frostbite and hypothermia is of extreme importance. Frostbite is when body tissue freezes. Common affected areas are hands, feet, and face. Signs include tingling or pain in the area, skin appearing white and feeling hard while the tissue underneath feels soft. If frostbite is suspected warm the affected area using body heat. Hypothermia occurs because the body loses more heat than it can produce. The core body temperature with be below 35°C (95°F). Hypothermia stages have a wide range from needing to be warmed up to the loss of consciousness. If hypothermia has occurred the person should be taken to a warm dry place and wet clothing removed. Wrap the body in a blanket or give a lukewarm bath. Call 911, an ambulance or seek medical attention.

To prevent this from happening dress properly. Layer clothing, wear insulated footwear, preferably water resistant. Winter footwear should also have good traction and contain anti-skid material to prevent slips and falls, and of course be in good condition.

Be sure to wear warm socks, a heavy coat which is wind and waterproof, warm hat which protects your ears, gloves, and a scarf. Opt for wool options as oppose to cotton. Wool is an excellent insulator and keeps you warmer while cotton is quick to absorb water. In extremely low temperatures cover ALL exposed skin. Rule of thumb: babies should always have one layer more than what you are wearing.
PLAYING SAFE IN THE SNOW
One of the best (okay, yes at times worst as well) parts about winters in Canada is the Snow. Children and adults alike love to go out and play in winter’s white fluffy stuff. However, like most things fun, there are risks when enjoying the winter wonderland. Here are some helpful hints for staying safe:

Tobogganing or Sledding or Skiing
Flying down a snow covered hill is almost guaranteed to happen once the snow falls, that being said, many people over look the safety hazards associated with it. I know, I know, I sound like a downer, but it is easier to pick out and prevent the dangers beforehand than deal with them once they occur. With that, children should always wear a helmet, and include a thin warm cap underneath for warmth. Ski or hockey helmets are ideal as they are designed for cooler conditions, and similar falls and speeds. Hills used to go down should be clear of trees, rocks, and other dangers, and include a level clear area with a lot of room for safe stopping. Sliding should occur in the middle of the hill, watch for other tobogganers, when you reach the bottom try to get out of the as quickly and safely as possible, and climbing back to the top should happen on the sides of hill. Signs of difficulty should be well understood by children. Equipment should always be checked to ensure it is fitting properly and in good condition. Weather can change quickly so be aware of the change and reduced visibility. And never play out doors alone, always use the buddy system.

Skating
Much like sledding, it is important to keep your head protected while skating. Canadian Standards Association (CSA) approved hockey helmets are ideal as they are tested for falls occurring on ice. The most vital part of skating or skating related sports is obviously the skates. Skates should fit snug while providing firm ankle support. Skate guards should always be applied to the blades of skates when not in use, even when going only a short distance. When skating on outdoor rinks such as ponds or lakes, ice should be a minimum of 15 centimeters (6 inches) thick and be smooth. Newly formed ice or ice with open water areas are very dangerous. Skating should occur with a group, free of obstacles, and away from traffic.

For more information regarding the CSA for helmets for winter sports as well as how to properly fit your helmet visit:
http://bst.ca/winter-activities-having-fun-keeping-your-head-safe

Miscellaneous Tips
- Check the batteries on your carbon monoxide detector and replace if needed. Using fireplaces, gas heaters or lanterns can lead to carbon dioxide poisoning.
- Remember to cover icy patches on your property with sand and salt to prevent falls for your visitors, neighbours, and self. Add extra to slippery stairs!
- Keep your home prepared for unpredictable weather and storms. Stock up on essentials such as batteries, flashlights, bottled water, first aid supplies, and nonperishable food. Especially if you home is in a more rural setting.

Shovel Safety Tips
- Choose a shovel that suits your size. A smaller shovel ensures you do not lift more weight than you can handle.
- Avoid twisting your body to remove snow, bend at the knees and tighten stomach muscles as you lift, and stand with your legs shoulder width apart.

Tips To Beat The Flu
* Good nutrition helps fight off cold and flu season. Dried and Fresh fruits, raw veggies, whole wheat crackers with cheese and yogurt, are all great options.
* Hydrate! Even in the cold winter months you lose lots of water sweating. Low-sugar juices high in vitamin D are great options. Hot drinks are a great source of antioxidants that help strengthen immune system.
* Flu Shots, yes there is a debate against it. But we suggest it!
* Lots of Rest, if you’re feeling sick stay home! No need to spread the germs to others and perpetuate the endless back and forth cycle.

Fight The Wintertime Blues
While there is so much to be happy and excited about during the winter months; Christmas, Santa, new snowfall, no school, family, eggnog; the winter months have the highest rate of depression and depression related illnesses. Many people tend to loose touch over the cool months which can cause feelings of loneliness and isolation. Be sure to check in and spend time as often as possible (even if short) with loved ones. A simple phone call can go a long way. Many seniors are starting groups which check in on each other. A group of 3 or 4 take turns., one each day checking in on each member of the group. This should not be seen as a daunting task but rather a fun way to stay connected with your friends. We so often get caught up in the hustle and bustle of the holiday season that we don’t get time to just relax. *Sigh*, taking time out from the stress and pressure of the holidays is important at maintaining overall feelings of wellbeing and happiness. Another good strategy to prevent feeling blue during the blistery winter months is to take a Vitamin D supplement or get outside. The sun gives of natural Vitamin D which is why it is known as the “sunshine vitamin”. Lower levels of Vitamin D have shown to correlate with depression. Taking more Vitamin D will not only aid with depression but also plays a big part in obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, autoimmune disease, osteoporosis, and cancer.