

**As the days grow shorter** and colder, our bodies become more vulnerable to the stresses and strains of winter. To maintain our peak mental and physical performance we need to prime our bodies for those colder months ahead – and one way of doing this is by tweaking our diet and eating habits. Ready to kiss those winter ills goodbye? Use our expert-backed tips and tricks to put the spring back in your step and give your body that extra oomph it needs.

## 1 Make a shopping list

Planning your meals in advance not only gives you one less thing to worry about, it also allows for huge control over what you eat. In a study in the journal *Public Health Nutrition*, people who used food planning strategies ate healthier diets than those who didn't.

'As we move into party season it's easy to let good habits slip,' says nutritional therapist Lorna Driver-Davis ([feelbetternutrition.co.uk](http://feelbetternutrition.co.uk)). 'By pre-planning and batch-cooking meals you can ensure you're ticking all the nutritional boxes.' Turn to page 48 for inspiration.

One key nutrient to factor into your winter meal plans is protein. 'Our bodies use protein to make the antioxidant glutathione, which protects us from potential pathogens and invaders,' explains Lorna. 'Planning your meals in advance means you can make sure you're getting enough of this vital nutrient.' For protein-packed chicken and egg recipes, turn to page 78.

## 2 Get snack savvy

Smart snacking can keep your mind and body going strong through winter. 'Not only does healthy snacking help to stave off hunger pangs and keep your energy levels at a constant, it has also been shown to help reduce stress,' says nutritionist Dr Marilyn Glenville ([marilynglenville.com](http://marilynglenville.com)). 'By eating little and often you can keep your blood sugar levels steady and eliminate symptoms such as irritability, brain fog and anxiety.'

The key is knowing when and what to snack on. 'I don't recommend going longer than three hours without eating,' says Dr Glenville. 'Aim to have breakfast, lunch and dinner, then eat small, nutritious, protein-packed snacks mid-morning and mid-afternoon. The addition of protein slows the release of carbohydrates from the snack for a steady release of energy.'



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## 3 Make time for tea

The humble brew can prove a great tool for revving up our fat-burning engines in winter. In a study from the *Journal of Nutrition*, researchers found that oolong tea boosted energy expenditure and improved fat-burning rate. Matcha green tea has also been shown to fight infections in the body, while caffeine-free rooibos contains many antioxidants proven to protect the liver. To get the full benefit of those herbal helpers you need to brew it right, says tea expert Angela Pryce ([angelapryce.com](http://angelapryce.com)). 'For black teas and herbals, use boiling water, and for more delicate greens, oolongs and whites, brew in slightly cooler water. Leave to infuse for three or four minutes to allow for full flavour extraction,' she says.

## 4 Swig some broth

'Broths provide useful fluids, minerals, vitamins, protein and essential fatty acids to help combat dry skin and stiff joints during winter,' says nutritionist and oriental medicine specialist Jacqueline Young. 'I often recommend kombu [kelp] broth to clients. Simply take 15–20g of kombu seaweed and soak in a litre of water in a pan for half an hour. Then bring to a very gentle simmer for about 20 minutes. Meanwhile, lightly brown some chopped carrots, onion, celery, parsley, garlic and fresh herbs in some olive or coconut oil. Remove the kombu and any residue from the stock and add the browned vegetables. Bring to the boil, then immediately reduce again to a simmer. Cook, uncovered, until reduced by about half. The broth is now ready to eat.'

## 5 Tuck into kimchi

Studies have shown that eating fermented foods is an effective way to boost gut health, thanks to their probiotic content. Kimchi and natto are two types of fermented vegetable that have been studied for their health benefits and, along with their probiotic perks, they have been shown to have antioxidant properties, supporting skin and brain health, and immune function. 'You can easily make fermented foods at home using an empty jar,' says Aqua Kyoto executive chef and master of fermentation Paul Greening. 'Submerge veg in salt water, or preferably its own juice, and put the lid on, opening it every couple of days to release the gas. Depending on the vegetable, the process should take three to four weeks. Just be sure to use non-chlorinated water to prevent damage to the probiotic.'