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You don't have to cave in to the cold

Exercise, carbs, vitamins and a vacation can help beat those winter woes

Jenny Lee, Vancouver Sun
Published: Monday, November 26, 2007

Winter instinctually feels like a time to dig in, slow down and eat heartily.

When squirrels and bears do it, it's viewed as the natural and majestic order of things. Too bad winter weight gain and sloth aren't regarded with the same respect in humans.

Mind you, human hibernation is not as peculiar as it sounds.

Impoverished farmers used to survive winter



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When winter streets are too slippery for running, Spanish Banks offers miles of sandy terrain for those seeking a challenge.

Bill Keay, Vancouver Sun

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and vitamin B complex also help boost serotonin production, Tsang says.

2. De-clutter your home.

It's surprisingly liberating. But there's no need to be coldly practical. Keep things that make you smile. Get rid of stuff that brings bad memories.

Not sure if you're really ready to let go of some stuff? Put it in a "maybe" box and let it sit in transition for a while. Donate things you don't need.

3. Miss the Grouse Grind? Train opposing muscle groups.

The Grouse Grind closed last week. If you're a hiker, try lane swimming instead.

Hiking is largely focused on the lower body. Swimming's upper body component will round out your muscle balance and symmetry. Upper body and core strength will also help your balance.

4. Check out vitamin D.

Weak winter sun means your body will absorb less vitamin D. Should you take vitamin D supplements? It's said to prevent osteoporosis, depression, bowel cancer and breast cancer, and affect diabetes and obesity.

"It's still a raging controversy. Many say it's overrated," says dermatologist Jason Rivers, of Pacific Dermaesthetics in Vancouver.

Nevertheless, about 800 IU of vitamin D a day in the winter, in conjunction with calcium, seems a reasonable approach.

"Just popping vitamin D is not necessarily the answer," Rivers says. "Vitamin D causes calcium absorption, which helps prevent osteoporosis. Whether the vitamin D/calcium combination is important in the prevention of cancer is not totally clear."

5. Recharge your summer sport.

Muscles strengthen in the way they're used. If you always work your biceps in a contraction, they will be strong in a contraction, but not in a lengthened position.

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