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Stay protected all year round

As the seasons roll round, you and your family are facing situations that might prove to be uncomfortable, unless you are prepared to meet them. Be it summer or winter you have to protect your family and survive without spending a fortune.

With the *Seasonal Survival Guide*, I'll get you ready for any season!



How to stay warm on a budget

In winter time it's getting really cold out there and whatever the reason may be, it's getting awfully cold inside your home too! Unfortunately, keeping your house at a steady temperature that keeps everyone warm and happy can be really expensive! Don't spend all winter freezing, learn how to make the most of what heat you are using, and avoid spending a fortune this winter!

1. Space Heater

This one is most likely the best way to stay warm and save money this winter. No need to warm the whole house when you can just warm the room you're in. These little guys will surprise you by how successfully they can heat a room!

2. Heavy Curtains

Ever stand next to a window and you can feel the cold coming through it? Invest in some heavy duty curtains this season and keep out that cold air. You can always draw them back when you want sunlight.

3. Seal Doors and Windows

Check around all your doors and windows for areas that may be letting cold air seep through. Whether its insulation, weather stripping or laying down a towel, seal these areas off by any means necessary.

4. Appropriate Footwear

It's amazing what a difference the simple addition of socks and really good slippers will do! If you have cold floors like wood and tile, a good pair of slippers is an absolute necessity for getting through the cold months.

5. Hearty Meals

The best way to stay warm, is to eat right, clothes and blankets only help to keep in your natural body heat. Make hearty filling meals like stews to help your body continue to create that heat.



6. Shut Unnecessary Doors

Close off entrances to rooms you're not using. This will help you keep cold air out, and trap any heat in the room you're in.

7. Gear Up Your Windows

Make sure your windows are ready to go, install storm windows and make sure they're closed properly.

8. Leave the Door Open While Showering

If this is possible, leave the door to your bathroom open while you shower to allow the steam to spread throughout your home.

9. Rugs

Invest in rugs to cover up those cold floors! Now's the time when shaggy thick, and even faux fur are not considered tacky.

10. Bake

This one is going to be tough, we know. Start baking more this winter! Having the oven on will help heat up your place very quickly.

11. Drink Lots of Warm Drinks

Choose a favorite mug, and keep it filled at all times with your favorite warm beverages. The more decaf tea you can drink the better. Treat yourself with yummy drinks like Chai Cider, or White Chocolate Chai with recipes from our sister site Kitchen Daily.

12. Cuddle

Winter is the perfect excuse to hug everyone around you constantly, so do so!

13. Electric Blankets and Heating pads

Try using these as an alternative to heating the whole house. Especially on slightly warmer nights, an electric blanket may suffice. Try these therapeutic oversized royal mink electric blankets from Bed Bath and Beyond.



14. Furnace Filter

Be sure that you're not making your furnace work harder than it needs to by changing the filter.

15. **Thermostat**

Get an adjustable and programmable thermostat. Controlling your heating will be one of the best ways to save money. Turn it down when you leave, and pump it up when you need to!

How to enjoy a cool breeze in summer heat

Sleep cooler. If the heat is keeping you from resting at night, try these ideas:

Get a fan for your room. A fan on a low setting that can keep a light breeze blowing across your room can work wonders. If you don't like air blowing directly on you while you sleep, you can still make your room cooler by using a fan in your window to circulate fresh air.

Put a small pillow in the freezer an hour or two before you go to bed. Put a few plastic shopping bags over it to keep ice from forming on the fabric.

Hang up your bedding in the coolest part of the house during the day. As soon as you get up, take your bedding to the coolest room in the house (in the basement, or where there's the most shade) and hang up the blankets and sheets so that each side is exposed to the



air. Take them down and put them back on your bed just before you go to sleep.

Use silk or satin pillowcases, and sateen sheets. These fabrics will feel smoother and cooler as you sleep.

Just add water. The relief is almost immediate, and will last for up to one hour or more.

Drink water frequently. Your body will feel cooler if you are hydrated. Try drinking eight ounces of water at least every hour. Adding mint leaves, or orange, lemon or cucumber slices to your water makes it more refreshing.

Keep the back of your neck in shade (wear a cap backwards, or raise your collar) or put a wet handkerchief on the back of the neck. The sensor for our body temperature control system is in this area, and so with this method you can make the rest of your body think that you are "cool".

Place or tie an icepack behind your head.

Wet all your hair, or just all along the hairline in a pinch. The evaporation of the water will cool your head (though it may make your hair a bit frizzy if it's curly!).

Wear a bandana with water soaked on it and put it on your head. Or you can relive the 80's and wear a wet terrycloth headband on your forehead.

Try using a water misting fan. These portable devices are battery operated so you can take them with you wherever you go. As you mist and fan yourself, the water is evaporated on your skin, giving you an instant cooling sensation.

Soak a t-shirt in the sink, wring it out and put it on. Sit in a lawn chair (or other chair that lets air through to you) in front of a fan. Re-wet as it dries. Use lukewarm water for this so you don't "shock" your system with cold water.

Wear a short sleeved shirt and put water on the sleeves only. If there is a breeze or fan blowing on you, you can actually get cold! Use a squirt bottle, the sink or hose if outside to keep your sleeves wet. If you are outside and wearing long pants and you put water on your legs, the water will cool your legs. Long skirts are also good for this. Just sprinkle the hemline with water.

Run cold water over your wrists for 10 seconds on each hand. This will reduce your temperature for roughly an hour.

Soak your feet in a bucket of cold water. The body radiates heat from the hands, feet, face and ears, so cooling any of these will efficiently cool the body. Kids wading pools are great for adults' feet too.

Fill your bathtub with cool water and get in. Once you are used to the temperature, let some water out and refill with cold water. Keep doing this until you are sufficiently cold. Your body will stay cool for a long time after you get out. For a fast cool-down, add ice!

3 Dress appropriately. There are several strategies to dress (or undress) for the heat, depending on your situation:

Wear nothing. If you're in a situation where you can go without clothes, this can be the most comfortable and natural way to stay cool.

Wear next-to-nothing. Put on a swimsuit, or wear your underwear at home.

Wear summer clothing. Wear loosely-woven natural fabrics (cotton, silk, linen) rather than polyester, rayon, or other artificial fibers (with the possible exception of performance fabrics).

Wear light colors. Darker colors will absorb the sun's heat and stay warmer longer than light or white clothing, which reflects light and heat. Wear natural summer clothing.

Cover yourself up. Covering up may actually keep you cooler, especially if the heat is low in humidity. In the scorching temperatures of the Middle Eastern deserts, traditional cultures wear clothing covering from head to toe. By protecting your skin from the sun beating down, you'll also shade your skin. Be sure your clothing is made of natural fabrics and loose-fitting.

Alter your diet. What you eat and drink can help keep you cool as well.

Stock your freezer with flavored ice treats. Freeze a bag of chopped fruit such as watermelon, pineapple or lemons. Cooling down can be a tasty experience too!

Use a hint of mint. Mint refreshes the skin and leaves a nice cooling sensation. Try a few minty or menthol products to cool your skin. Slather on lotion with peppermint (avoid your face and eyes), shower with peppermint soap, use a minty foot soak or other powders with mint. There



are even a few minty recipes you could try, for example:

Candied Mint Leaves

Watermelon Yogurt Mint Smoothie

Mint Tea

Irish Cream Mint Chocolate Drink

Minted Fresh Green Pea Soup

Mint Truffles

Basil Mint Orange Pesto

Dark Chocolate Dipped Mint Leaves

Pudina Aloo (Potatoes in Mint Sauce)

Green Pea and Mint Sandwiches

Use cucumbers. Slice a thin piece of cold cucumber (from the fridge or a cooler) and stick it in the middle of your forehead! This feels fantastic on a hot day or when stuck in a hot car and works almost immediately! An ice cube or a cold soda can work similarly, though the astringency of the cucumber is more refreshing for your eyelids.

Eat spicy food. It's not a coincidence that many people in hotter regions of the world eat spicy food. Spicy (hot to the taste) food increases perspiration which cools the body as it evaporates. It also can cause an endorphin rush that is quite pleasant and might make you forget about the heat.

Go downstairs and lie on the floor. Warm air rises (since it's less dense than cooler air) so it's layered on top of the downward moving cooler air, which sinks lower. If you're in a house, for example, stay lower than the warm air. Make your way to the basement or lower level. It will be coolest near the floor on the ground level.

Try a heat snorkeling system. Take a glass and fill it almost to the brim with ice cubes. Hold it up to your mouth and blow gently into the cup. The ice causes the air you are blowing into the cup to cool down drastically, and since the air only has one way out of the cup (the hole which should now be aiming right at your face) the cold air is forced out over your skin.

To put the "snorkeling system" to more efficient use, point a fan into a square of four cups filled with ice water and ice cubes. The cooler air in the cups have nowhere to go, but out. Each night, refreeze the cubes and open the windows instead.

Think cool. Read books about climbing Mount Everest, visiting Norway, or watch winter movies like "March of the Penguins" and "Ice Age." You might not be physically cooler, but if your mind envisions a cold environment, you might feel a bit cooler.

Rest smart. Relax and cool down at the same time with these tips:

Sit still. Do not try to fan yourself — trying to move while feeling hot can make you feel hotter. Simply rest until the evening.

Sit in the shade. Find a shaded area and set up a water misting system that connects to an ordinary garden hose that can be found at home improvement stores. Sit there and let the mist cool you off.

Avoid peak sunlight hours. Take a cue from people in extremely hot climates and avoid going out between 10 a.m. and 3p.m., when the sun's rays are hottest. You'll also avoid a sunburn this way.

Cooling Your House

Close your blinds. Shutting your blinds and curtains during the day will help block the sun's heat. As soon as the sun hits your building in the morning, close all windows and keep exterior doors and windows closed throughout the hottest part of the day. Do this until night falls and it's cool



enough to open the windows for the night.

For even better protection, get aluminized blinds or insulated curtains (or use removable sheets of reflective bubble insulation, or cardboard cut to size and covered in foil.) If possible, go around the outside of your house and clip sheets over the OUTSIDE of the house, especially on the south side (or north side if you live south of the equator).

These exterior curtains you rigged up will keep the sun's heat from getting anywhere near your window frame, but still let a breeze through. You can even rig a temporary "porch" awning out of broomsticks and sheets.

Open the windows at night. Open selective windows so that cooler night air is blowing in throughout the evening. Leaving all interior doors open (including closets and kitchen cabinets) helps, too. If you leave them closed, they store the daytime heat and your house won't cool off as much at night.

Be sure to get up and close the windows and blinds as soon as the sunlight hits your house. This can be as early as 5 or 6 in the morning in some areas.

Cool down your house with fans. Position a ceiling fan, an upstairs window fan or an attic fan to draw off the heat collected in upper rooms and push the heat outdoors. Set up your portable fan so that the fan sucks up cooler air from the floor below, and blows hot air upwards towards the ceiling.

Make a DIY air conditioner. Put a metal bowl of salted ice in front of a fan, and adjust the fan so that the air is blowing over the ice. Or, use one or more 2 liter bottles and fill them mostly full of (water - 70%) & (rock salt - 10%) (air - 20% for expansion) (the salt brings

the temp of the frozen water down to a lower °F), freeze them, then place them in a large bowl (to catch dripping condensation). Position a fan to blow on them. As the salty ice in the bottles melts, the air cools around them. The fan will blow that air at you. The water & salt in the bottles can be refrozen every night and used again repeatedly.

You can also turn on your stove fan (on the ventilator hood) or open up your chimney flue. These will also draw hot air out of the house and pull cooler evening air into the house.

Turn off all heat sources. Don't use the stove or oven to eat. Eat cold food, or use the microwave. Incandescent light bulbs also create heat - switch to compact fluorescents or LEDs. Turn off your lamps and your computer when you're not using them. You should also turn off your TV since it gives off a lot of heat, as well as some plug-in power adapters.

Avoid steam. During the day, don't take a hot shower, wash dishes and clothes or cook until after dark. Make sure your pot lids are tight-fitting. Make sure the door gasket seals on your oven, washer and dishwasher are in good shape and have no breaks or rips.

Adjust your pilot light. If you have a gas stove with pilot lights, make sure they are set correctly. If they are set too high, they will produce excess heat.

Put smooth white fabrics over anything in your house that's fuzzy. For example, you could cover corduroy pillows with white satin pillowcases for summer, put linen slipcovers over wool sofas, or just throw white sheets over furniture. Light-colored fabric will reflect heat instead of absorbing it, and the smooth texture will give you an impression of coolness.

Use light-colored roofing. If you have the choice, choose a lighter roof or roof coating. It will reflect sunlight rather than absorbing it.

Insulate your home. A home that has well-insulated walls and attic will actually keep the heat out of the house in hot seasons. Just imagine your home as a gigantic Styrofoam cooler! There are lots of insulation options to choose from, including types that can be conveniently blown into your walls without much hassle. Another bonus is that there may be government grants to help offset the cost of this kind of upgrade.



Plant trees. Leafy trees can shade your home or yard and keep things considerably cooler. Deciduous trees (those that lose their leaves in winter) will let sunlight through in winter when it's desired and create shade in summer.

If you can't plant a tree, build an overhead trellis and grow grape vines on it. Their leafy vines will act like deciduous trees and you can pluck grapes.

Plan patios smartly. Don't put unshaded patios of concrete, stone or brick right against the house where they will reflect sun heat onto walls or windows, especially on the south or west sides. Rocks, stone and concrete also retain heat longer than planted areas after the sun goes down.

If you already have such a feature in your landscape, plant a tree so that both it and that side of the building will be shaded during the hot parts of the day.

Take shade from awnings and porches. Build any summer porch on the north side of your house, which is generally the shady side. The south and west sides of your home will generally be the hottest and most in need of shade, so plan the location of windows and exterior doors in your home.

Send up the cool air. If your home has a basement and central air system, have an HVAC professional add a cold air return in the basement to pull the naturally cool air that falls down and recycle it into the rest of your home by simply setting your furnace to "fan" mode.

Install an individual room ventilation system with a cool air intake, hot air exhaust and temperature and humidity controls. This will bring the night-time air in and let the A/C take over in the middle of the day.

Install a whole-house fan. This will push hot air into the attic, where it dissipates via attic vents. To cool your house, open a door to the basement, and make sure that all doors between the basement and the room where the fan is located are open. Turn it on at night and open downstairs windows, and that will cool down the house. However, make sure that you've got good attic vents, or else your attic won't take the heat.

Install attic vents. It's amazing how much difference a cool attic makes to the temperature of a house.

Install a lockable exterior door that allows airflow. This could be a screen door, a gated/barred door or a shutter door. This will let

the breeze in while keeping your privacy secure. Window locks that keep the window open (only a couple of inches) are available for modern or old fashioned windows. These will allow you to cool down the house at night without compromising your safety.

Tips

Do not leave a fan on in an enclosed room when no one is present (unless it's an attic fan). A fan does not cool the air already in the room; in fact, it heats it. The fan's motor generates heat and even the circulating air creates a less significant amount of heat from friction.

It just feels cooler when you are present because of natural moisture evaporation from the skin, which only cools your body if you are in the room. Save electricity and turn off all fans in enclosed rooms that are not occupied.

If all else fails, go to the mall, library, church, movie theater or some other air-conditioned public building.

Don't forget that the human race lived for many, many years without air conditioning. Within the limits of your particular health situation, your body can acclimate to the summer increase in temperature. Just become accustomed to the fact that you may have to alter your activities and schedule to "beat the heat."

Feel good that you are actually helping the environment by not running an energy-draining air conditioner!

The early morning and evening are usually cooled down enough to enjoy your walk, run, hike, bike, gardening, or yard work.

During a heat wave, many towns and cities open up air-conditioned "cooling centers" in nearby schools and community centers, and will help you reach them. If you have no air conditioning, please call your local government to find your local cooling centers, especially if you are elderly or have a medical condition.

Cooling methods that depend on the evaporation of water, including sweating, will work best if the humidity is fairly low. If your garage is under living areas of your home, leave your hot car outside to cool off before putting it in the garage.

Warnings

In many areas, high day temperatures can set off afternoon thunderstorms. Be prepared for such weather situations.

If you experience symptoms of heat stroke or dehydration, call 911 or other emergency personnel and seek professional assistance. A body temperature above 104 °F (40 °C) is life-threatening and fatal if it reaches 113 °F (45 °C).

While it is rarely a problem for individuals with good health, over-hydration is a possibility for individuals with heart, liver or kidney problems. If you have any serious health problems, be mindful of how much water you drink, since your kidneys may not be able to excrete an excessive amount of water properly.

Heat is often the uncomfortable companion of drought. If there are water restrictions in your area, make sure you consider them before implementing any of the water-intensive suggestions above. Failure to comply may get you a hefty fine or even jail time.

Never leave children or pets in cars alone for any amount of time. Babies, children, pregnant women, and the elderly are all much more prone to overheating than others. Be sure to keep an eye on members of your family, co-workers, and neighbors. Also, as you age, your body does not regulate temperature as well as it used to (even if you stay fit) and your skin may not be able to sweat. Be cautious and see if you can relax in an air-conditioned place for a while.

Never drink alcohol to try to stay cool.

A person with heatstroke or sunstroke may feel cool and clammy to the touch since their body is attempting to cool down. They may not be aware they have heatstroke. If a person seems slow, confused, or even claims to be "cold", get them out of the sun immediately, seat them in an air-conditioned room or a tub, and give them cool beverages.

How to prevent spring asthenia

Spring brings not only beautiful weather. We feel lack of energy and have difficulty focusing, which are the first signs of spring fatigue or asthenia installation.

There is intense and prolonged fatigue, both physically and mentally. It is common in women and young people and is accompanied by lack of energy and concentration, irritability and sadness. Many of these symptoms overlap with those of mild and moderate forms of depression.



It occurs mainly in the transition from winter with low temperatures and the dark days of spring season. This shift requires a physical, biochemical and psychological adaptation to new environmental conditions, that sometimes is difficult because of overlapping factors:

- Organic - the existence of underlying hematologic diseases (iron deficiency anemia, vitamin B12 deficiency anemia), heart disease, kidney or liver impairments of mild or moderate mineral deficiency (iron, selenium, magnesium) and vitamins (B group, folic acid, vitamin d) from an unbalanced diet.

- Psychological - prolonged stress, insufficient rest, anxious-depressive disorders.

Medical conditions should be diagnosed and treated under the guidance of your family doctor or specialist.

A balanced diet will help

A nutritionally balanced diet that includes all food groups, can provide health and energy at the same time.

Energy and vitality can be provided if your body receives an adequate caloric intake, optimal proportions of macronutrients (carbohydrates 55% of total calories, protein 15% and 30% fat) and micronutrients. For psychological mood and tone, the best foods are those that stabilize blood sugar (carbohydrates or carbohydrates with slow releasing) and those that stimulate production of hormones that make good sense as serotonin.



A very effective way to increase your energy and mood is the physical activity. Even a simple 15 minute walk can be energizing and benefits increase exponentially with increasing physical activity. Studies have shown that physical activity practiced regularly can improve depression and trains beneficial changes in the human body, which increases energy levels and mental tone.

Home remedies for fatigue

- In cases of mental depression and physical fatigue, morning drink on an empty stomach, a cup of spinach juice. In anemia and demineralization drink before main meals a combination of one hundred ml of spinach juice and a hundred ml of nettle juice.
- Consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables is more than necessary. Vegetables and fruits make a significant contribution of nutrients and helps the body to recover after a difficult, demanding period.
- Tea - core liquid, which strengthens our immune system, if consumed properly and frequently.
- Predisposition to depression is higher in early spring and that because the body needs toning the immune system. This you can do sitting outdoors in the sun or trough a consistent intake of vitamins.
- Rest is also very important in the treatment of spring asthenia. Daily walks, walking, outdoors, preferably in the morning or evening before bedtime have calming efect. In this way, the body will easier adapt to those changes and put your blood in circulation.

How to prevent winter flu

Sneezing, coughing, fever, aches and pains...



Worried about flu symptoms like these? As winter approaches, most of us are.

In today's blog, I provide you with a comprehensive seven-step plan for preventing colds and flu and staying healthy this winter.

I also include eight supplements to boost your immune system and help you fight off sickness.

7 steps to stay healthy all winter long

This list of natural remedies was put together by all the doctors and nutritionists at the UltraWellness Center to help keep you healthy through the flu season.

1. Drink plenty of fluids, especially warmer fluids. With dry air inside and out, winter can be a particularly challenging time to stay hydrated. Consuming adequate fluids supports all your body's functions, including the immune system. Make soups and broths (from scratch with fresh vegetables, if possible) and drink them throughout the week. Drink herbal teas like ginger and echinacea daily. Keep a bottle of filtered water with you at all times. Avoid concentrated fruit juices and sweetened beverages, as the sugar content is harmful for the immune system. If you do drink juice, dilute it with two-thirds water.
2. Try a daily saline flush. Along with staying hydrated, flushing your sinuses with mild salt water helps to keep mucous membranes moist, which protects you from microbes. You can use a neti pot or easy-to-carry plastic bottles that come with saline packets to take with you to the office or when traveling.
3. Avoid simple sugars as much as possible. This includes sweet treats and desserts but also white flour and refined grain products,

which turn into sugar quickly. Studies have shown that refined sugars can suppress your immune system for hours after ingested.

4. Have protein with each meal. Proteins are the building blocks of the body, including your immune and detoxification systems. It's important to eat organic, clean and lean animal protein, as well as plant-based proteins (legumes, nuts/seeds), with each meal and snack.

5. Add garlic, onions, ginger and lots of spices (oregano, turmeric) to your meals. Add these to your soups and vegetable dishes, as well as to bean dips and sauces. Garlic and onions offer a wide spectrum of antimicrobial properties.

6. Eat multiple servings of colorful fruits and vegetables high in vitamins C and A and phytonutrients, which support the immune system. Choose more leafy greens, cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, Brussels sprouts and cauliflower), peppers, sweet potatoes and squash. Aim for three to four servings of fruits and five or more servings of vegetables a day.

7. Get sufficient sleep. We all know sleep restores and heals the body. Without adequate sleep, optimal immune function is next to impossible. Get in a better rhythm and head to bed earlier on dark winter nights; aim for seven to eight hours a night. Incorporating various relaxation and breathing techniques throughout the day to help with stress and allow the mind to rest is also very helpful.



8 supplements for immunity support

In addition to the steps above, I also strongly encourage you to take the following supplements to support your immune system.

1. **Vitamin D3:** Adequate vitamin D status is critical for optimal immune function, which cannot be achieved without supplementation during the winter months. For accurate dosing, get your levels of 25 OH vitamin D checked. The ideal blood level is 50-75 ng/dl. Many of us need 5,000 IU or more of vitamin D3 a day in the winter. Start with 2,000 IU a day for adults, 1,000 IU for children.
2. **Buffered vitamin C:** We've long known the role of vitamin C in supporting the immune system. Take 500 to 1,000 mg through out the day with meals and snacks.
3. **Zinc citrate:** You can take an additional supplement or consume more foods high in this powerful immune supporting nutrient. Oysters and pumpkin seeds are the best food sources.
4. **Probiotics:** Healthy gut flora supports a healthy gut, a major barrier against pathogens that is integral to the immune system.
5. **Fish oil (artic cod liver oil):** This old-time remedy for good health and robust immunity still stands true. Arctic cod liver oil contains additional vitamin A and D for added immune protection.
6. **1-3, 1-6 Beta glucans:** Much research has shown that these compounds up-regulate the function of our innate immune system. This part of your immune system is the first line of defense against viruses and bacteria. It helps your white blood cells bind to and kill viruses and bacteria.

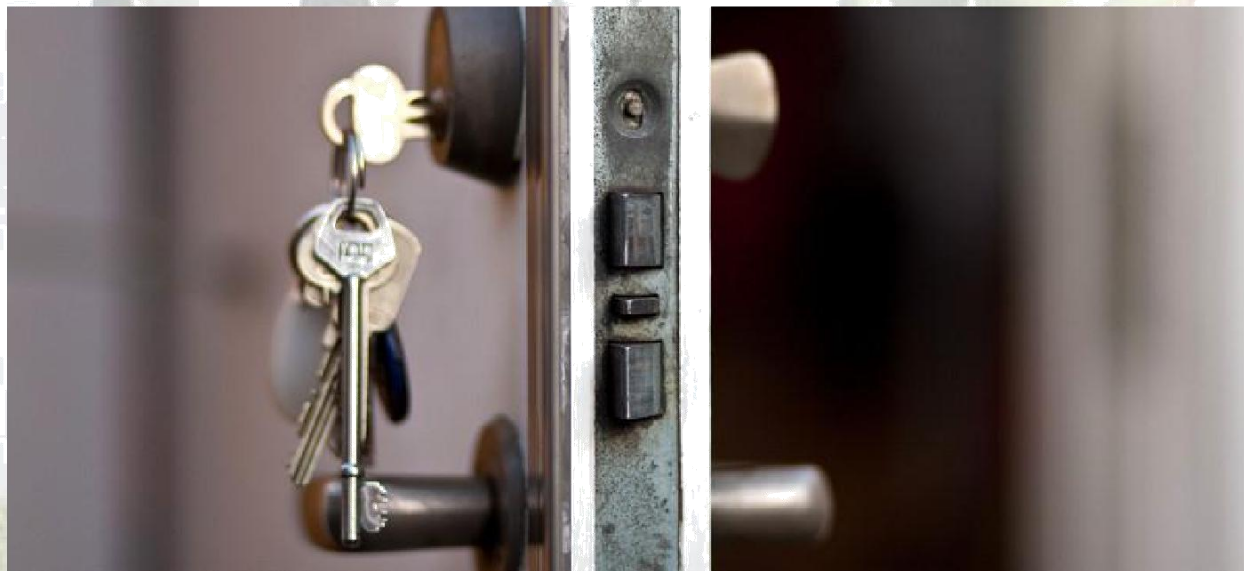
7. Antiviral/anti-bacterial herbs: Many herbs have broad-spectrum antimicrobial effects or immune-enhancing effects. Formulas contain different immune boosters such as astragalus, echinacea, green tea extract, elderberry, andrographis, goldenseal, monolaurin, various immune enhancing mushrooms and beta 1, 3 glucan.

8. Cordyceps and other mushroom extracts: These possess immune-supporting properties. Look for supplements that contain these, as well as zinc and vitamin C, for a three-pronged approach to immune support.

By following this plan, you should enjoy vibrant health all winter long.

How to protect your home while on holiday

After you have packed your bags and planned your itinerary, you still need to consider how to best protect your home while on vacation. Of course you never leave expecting that something bad will happen, but it is certainly always best to be prepared, just in case.



The basic idea or theme, no matter what tips or advice you take on how to best protect your home while it is unattended, is that you should do everything you can in order to make it look like there are still people and signs of activity in the home.

Basic Tips

If it looks like there are still people at home, you are much less likely to be robbed. Do everything you can to make it look like there is activity both inside and outside the house. This would be an excellent time to have some lawn or exterior work done. You may need to make arrangements with whoever is doing the work, either paying them a deposit ahead of time, or arranging to pay the balance at a later date.

Make sure they mail the invoice (do not take the chance that they will tape it to the door or put it somewhere that is a dead giveaway no one is home). Even a neighborhood teenager could be a good choice for having some basic work done, like mowing or trimming hedges.

You could also consider having some lights or motion sensors put in. A battery operated push light in the window can be a great idea. Better yet, connect some outside and inside lights to motion sensors. This way, if anyone gets too close, the lights will come on automatically.

Electronic timers may also be helpful. The danger here is that if someone was really intent on robbing you, they will likely be watching the house for a period of time. If they notice that the lights go on at exactly 7:05pm and off at exactly 10:35pm each night, it would not take a genius to figure out they are on a timer.

The way to make timers work is to use a varied schedule. If you can find timers which are controlled by an app on your cell phone, that would be the best option. Then, you can vary the times, making it look more like people are still in the home.

Consider adding something to make noise. This mimics actual conversations. Take an mp3 recording or even a good quality tape of CD player. Just make a loop of a long spoken track. Place the player near the door. This way, anyone who comes near the house will think that there are people talking.

Keeping Watch

An easy, low tech way to make sure that your place is covered is by asking a trusted friend, neighbor or family member. Have them go over to your home several times a week just to check on everything.

The best thing about this is that you might not need to pay them! Of course, an offer of a free lunch or dinner would be a nice gesture upon your return. You could also have them collect mail and take the trash cans out and/or bring them back in (a next door neighbor works the best for this, since they are already going to be doing these things for their own house).

Of course, having the mail stopped and held by the local post office is also an option, although a smart robber who is watching will notice that the mail is not being delivered. This is also a tell-tale sign that someone is out of town.

In some cases, the local police department is able to help with a few of these tasks. This is not a replacement for a trusted friend or neighbor. However, having a police officer do a 'vacation check' a few times while you are away is still an additional level of security.

Security System

Speaking of security, you also have the option of installing a security system. There is no better way to secure your home while you are away on vacation than a home alarm system. With the technology available, at minimum you will be able to have a system with a control panel, door and window sensors, motion sensors, glass break sensors and often times these features can be monitored using your cell phone.

Additional Precautions

Prevent damage from power surges: It would really be bad if you come home and find many of your valuable electronic appliances and items damaged or destroyed due to a power surge. Consider unplugging the computer, TV, stereo and other electronics.

Conversely, you could connect such items to a good surge protector. Just make sure that it is something which has a good rating and can withstand a large load of power.

Control your social status: Why broadcast to the whole world that you are not going to be home? Many people cannot seem to wait to let everyone on Facebook or Twitter know that they are about to leave. An even worst move is to upload photos while on vacation. Sure, many of these people are your friends, but your friends are not the only ones who see these status updates.

Alert your alarm company: If you do happen to have a security system, notify the company that you will be away. This is especially needed if you are going on an extended trip. Of course, it goes almost without saying to make sure that the alarm is set properly before you leave!

Protect your pipes: Especially if you live in an area where cold weather is a possibility, make sure that your pipes are protected. In vulnerable areas like the attic, basement and crawl spaces, make sure the pipes are well insulated. In such a situation, it is also very important to have a trusted friend, family member or neighbor stop by every so often just to turn on faucets to make extra sure that the pipes do not freeze.

Turn up or down the thermostat: You do not want to turn the thermostat off completely. In the winter, about 55 degrees seems to be the cut off point and 80 degrees is a good setting during the summer.

Water heater: Almost no one remembers to turn down the temperature on their water heater. This can be an excellent way to save electricity as well.

Snow removal: Arrange for snow removal. Making sure that this is done in a reasonable amount of time after a storm is essential. Many states have laws which require snow to be removed from their sidewalks and walkways within a certain time after the storm has ended. Besides, allowing it to pile up is another dead giveaway that no one is home.

Lock everything: This seems obvious, but every once in a while a robber gets into a house just because something was left open or unlocked!

Secure valuables: Never leave anything of value out in plain sight. If you have not already done so, now may be a good time to consider placing any jewelry, extra cash or other valuables in a safe deposit box or even a secure hidden safe within the house. Nothing should ever be visible from any window.

Lock and secure the garage: Secure the door and any other entrances to the garage. Do this even if there is no way to enter the house from the garage (if there is an entrance to the house, then this step is even more important). There have been numerous robberies where the thieves simply grabbed what they could from the garage and then took off.

Outside spare keys: Do not leave any spare keys outside the house. All burglars know the trick of keeping a spare key under the welcome mat. Actually, if you are going away for more than a day or two, you would be well served to pick up any key that you have hidden in an outside “safe” spot. Consider leaving a spare key with the same trusted friend, neighbor or family member (possibly all three) who is going to be regularly checking on things.

Other Ideas

Studies have also shown over and over again that if it takes a burglar more than 5 minutes to break into a home, they will simply stop and go elsewhere (if it LOOKS like it will be difficult to break in, they likely will not even try). Having said that, if your home is still targeted, you want to try and make it as difficult as possible to actually get in.



One of the best pieces of advice is to use strong doors. They should be at least 1 ¾ inches thick and made from metal. If metal is not an option or not available, then some type of strong hardwood would be acceptable. Just remember that even the best lock is worthless if a strong burglar can simply kick in your door!

While it is not usually a good idea to turn off the main water supply to your house, consider certain areas on a case by case basis. If you know there is a leaky toilet or faucet, turn off the water to those areas. Another area to watch is the dishwasher.

The Final Word Is...Prepare For The Worst:

No matter what you do or precautions you take, it is still possible that something could happen while you are away. If this happens, it will probably not be a pleasant experience, but it hurts less if you are prepared ahead of time. You may go ahead and check your insurance policy and claim procedures before leaving. Create a home inventory and take lots of good quality pictures of everything in your house. This may take some time, but afterwards it is just a matter of keeping everything updated.

Taking all of the precautions listed in this guide will ensure that you have much less chance of a robbery or something bad happening while you are away. If the worst occurs, you will also be better prepared to deal with the situation.

