

# JIFNEWS

A Quarterly Newsletter from the Somerset County Joint Insurance Fund featuring Safety, Health & Wellness



## Safety Tips for Ice & Snow Removal

by Cody Sorensen, eHow Contributor

### TAKE YOUR TIME WHEN REMOVING SNOW AND ICE

About 118,000 people are treated for snow-removal related injuries each year, according to the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission. Many of these injuries can be avoided by adhering to practical ice and snow removal safety tips. The choices you make while removing snow and ice may have a direct impact on the rest of your life. Broken bones, torn muscles and twisted ligaments can take years to heal. Even after they've healed, negative side-effects may endure. Consider these possibilities whenever a snow storm blows into your town.

#### 1. STRETCHING WARM-UPS

Before you step a foot outside, stretch out your muscles. Stretching your muscles can help you avoid muscle cramps by getting the blood flowing. March in place for a few minutes to get your heart pumping. This aerobic exercise will increase the blood circulation throughout your body. You'll be more alert and agile. Stretch out the major muscles that you'll be using to remove the ice and snow. Stretch your leg, arm, stomach, shoulder and back muscles.

#### 2. APPROPRIATE DRESS

Wear clothing suited for the outdoor weather

conditions. Avoid going outside if the temperatures are below zero degrees. If the wind is blowing, a wind chill could send that temperature plummeting. Frostbite may occur on skin exposed to the elements. Wear clothing specifically designed to keep you warm and dry. Snow boots with traction designed for walking on snow and ice will help keep you on your feet, while snow gloves will protect your fingers from cold. Wear a pair of sunglasses to help you see better in blinding, white snow. Layer your clothing to increase insulation and wear a jacket with a hood.

#### 3. HYDRATION

Drink plenty of water before heading outside. Avoid smoking and caffeinated drinks, because tobacco constricts blood vessels and caffeine increases heart rate. The caffeine also constricts blood vessels. Snow and ice removal is a lot harder when what's happening inside your body works against you. You may not feel like drinking water during cold weather, but moisture in the air is less when temperatures remain below freezing. Fill a thermos with water and bring it outside with you.

#### 4. WALKING ON ICE AND SNOW

Hold onto handrails when going down or up staircases. Black ice can be difficult to see, but it can form on decks, patios, driveways and stairs. Widen your stance to help balance your weight on slippery surfaces. If it's just too slippery, apply magnesium chloride to help melt the ice. Do this before attempting to shovel or snow blow the snow. Always follow any ice melting product's application and safety labels before using them. Some can damage surfaces, and kill plants and animals. Scatter some kitty litter to provide better traction on snow and ice.

#### 5. SNOW REMOVAL

Keep the shovel blade on the ground while pushing snow. Remove snow whenever it accumulates to 2 inches. It's easier to remove 2 inches of snow 10 times than it is to remove 10 inches of snow one time. Lift with your legs when shoveling and avoid twisting with your lower back. If you're using a snowblower, keep your hands and feet away from the moving parts at all times, never remove the shields or guards and turn the engine off if the snow blower ever jams. Only clean it out when the engine is off. Always keep a good line of visibility and never leave a running blower unattended.





# Vitamin Quiz

**1. What are the two categories of vitamins, based on how the body absorbs and stores them?**

- A. Pills and Capsules
- B. Water-soluble and Fat-soluble
- C. Solid and Liquid
- D. Flintstone and Centrum

**2. What affects the vitamin content of the foods you eat?**

- A. Light, Heat, Oxygen
- B. How food is prepared
- C. Storing food improperly
- D. Whether you eat foods raw or cooked
- E. All of the above

**3. What is the best way to get your vitamins?**

- A. In a pill
- B. From your Grandma
- C. From foods
- D. From a booster shot
- E. All of the above

**4. From which food groups can you get the vitamins you need to be healthy?**

- A. Meats
- B. Vegetables and Fruits
- C. Whole grains
- D. Dairy products
- E. All of the above

## ANSWERS

**Question 1 | B – Water and Fat-Soluble**

Scientists generally divide vitamins into these two categories based on how they are absorbed and stored by your body. The water-soluble vitamins are the B's and Vitamin C. The fat-soluble ones are Vitamin A, Vitamin D, Vitamin E and Vitamin K.

Water-soluble vitamins, as the name suggests, can be dissolved in water, so they are absorbed directly into the bloodstream. They travel freely through the blood to the places in your body where they are needed and any excess can be removed by the kidneys and excreted through the urine.

Fat-soluble vitamins, because they cannot dissolve in water, must be absorbed through the lymph and then be transported in the blood by protein carriers. Any excess can be stored in the fat storage areas of your body.

Fat-soluble or water-soluble vitamins differ in how they are handled in your body. The significance of this to you is that since the fat-soluble ones can be stored for later use, you probably don't need to worry as much about a deficiency. However, they also can be more toxic because of the very fact that your body does not excrete

the excess.

Water-soluble vitamins must be obtained almost daily, since your body will excrete the excess each day. By the same token, they are less likely to become toxic, although it is still possible if you take very large doses.

**Question 2 | E – All of the Above**

Vitamins in foods can be destroyed by light, heat and oxygen. Storage methods and food preparation techniques will affect the amount retained by the foods. To minimize this problem, refrigerate produce in airtight containers, and during preparation, steam or cook vegetables lightly, avoiding high temperatures and extended cooking times whenever possible.

**Question 3 | C – From Foods**

It is generally agreed that the best way to get nutrients in your diet is from the foods you eat. Even if you take a supplement, the idea is to do just that—supplement—the foods in your diet, not replace them.

The nutrients in food seem to be more accessible to your body, than those from pills because they are not isolated, but surrounded by other substances that work with them to keep you healthy. This is not to say you should not take a supplement; many health experts recommend that you do. However, do not make the mistake of thinking that a pill can replace nutritious whole foods in your diet.

**Question 4. | E – All of the Above**

Vitamins are found in varying degrees in all of the food groups. Fruits, vegetables, cereals, grains, meat and other protein foods, dairy products, and fats and oils. Eating a balance of food selections from all of the groups will help insure that you are getting all of the vitamins you need to be healthy.

## WHAT IF YOU DON'T GET ENOUGH...

**Vitamin A** | your skin and vision will suffer.

**B Vitamins** | you will not have the energy to do the things you want to do each day.

**Vitamin C** | your gums will bleed and your wounds will not heal.

**Vitamin D** | your bones will become frail, and a lack of Vitamin D has recently been linked to some kinds of cancer.

**Vitamin E** | you may feel tired, and studies suggest that you will be more susceptible to certain diseases.

**Vitamin K** | your blood will not clot and your bones will be frail.

# COLD REMEDIES: WHAT WORKS

by Mayo Clinic Staff

If you catch a cold, you can expect to be sick for one to two weeks. But that doesn't mean you have to be miserable. These remedies may help:

**WATER AND OTHER FLUIDS.** Water, juice, clear broth or warm lemon water with honey helps loosen congestion and prevents dehydration. Avoid alcohol, coffee and caffeinated sodas, which can make dehydration worse.

**A SALTWATER GARGLE.** A 1/2 teaspoon salt dissolved in an 8-ounce glass of warm water — can temporarily relieve a sore or scratchy throat.

**SALINE NASAL DROPS AND SPRAYS.** Over-the-counter saline nasal drops and sprays combat stuffiness and congestion. In infants, experts recommend instilling several saline drops into one nostril, then gently suctioning that nostril with a bulb syringe. Saline nasal sprays may be used in older children. Unlike nasal decongestants, saline drops and sprays don't lead to a rebound effect — a worsening of symptoms when the medication is discontinued — and most are safe and nonirritating, even for children.

**CHICKEN SOUP.** Chicken soup might help relieve cold and flu symptoms in two ways. First, it acts as an anti-inflammatory by inhibiting the movement of neutrophils — immune system cells that participate in the body's inflammatory response. Second, it temporarily speeds up the movement of mucus, possibly helping relieve congestion and limiting the amount of time viruses are in contact with the nose lining.

**OVER-THE-COUNTER COLD AND COUGH MEDICATIONS IN OLDER CHILDREN AND ADULTS.** Nonprescription decongestants and pain relievers offer some symptom relief, but they won't prevent a cold or shorten its duration, and most have some side effects. If used for more than a few days, they can actually make symptoms worse.

Experts agree that these medications are dangerous in children younger than age 2. The FDA is evaluating the safety of over-the-counter cold and cough medications in older children.

**ANTIHISTAMINES.** First-generation (sedating) antihistamines may provide minor relief of several cold symptoms, including cough, sneezing, watery eyes and nasal discharge. However, results are conflicting and the benefits may not outweigh the side effects.

**HUMIDITY.** Cold viruses thrive in dry conditions — another reason why colds are more common in winter. Dry air also dries the mucous membranes, causing a stuffy nose and scratchy throat. A humidifier can add moisture to your home, but it can also add mold, fungi and bacteria if not cleaned properly. Change the water in your humidifier daily, and clean the unit according to the manufacturer's instructions. help.