DECEMBER

# Healthy holidays

## Monthly well-being tip

## Benefits of winter sunlight

*While there's plenty of sunlight to go around the rest of the year, the lack of sunlight in the winter months isn't great — and not just because it's harder to feel awake and lively during the day. That sunshine is also important for other areas of your health and well-being. When the sun comes out from behind the clouds this winter, apply sunscreen and soak up some rays. There are plenty of reasons why getting sunlight in the winter is important. Here are five reasons why getting sunlight during the winter can be good for your health.*



### NATIONAL OBSERVANCES*

- National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month (3D Month): Focuses on safety and awareness during the holiday season.
- Universal Human Rights Month: Highlights dignity, equality and civil rights.
- Safe Toys and Gifts Month: Promotes child safety when shopping for the holidays.
- National Handwashing Awareness Week (December 6-12): Promotes correct hand hygiene to limit the spread of germs and infections.
- National Influenza Vaccination Week (December 7-11): Promotes importance of receiving an annual flu vaccine.

1. **Sunlight can help support your immune system and prevent disease.** A study from Georgetown University* found that when your skin is exposed to the sun without sunscreen, those rays increase the movement of your T cells, which help keep your immune system strong. Separately, the vitamin D your body produces through sunlight also does a lot of good for your overall health. "Vitamin D is synthesized in the skin with strategic sun exposure, enabling the body to build bones, tame inflammation and boost immunity," writes Frank Lipman, MD. "Vitamin D is also thought to play a key role in preventing a number of cancers, including pancreatic, lung, breast, ovarian, skin, prostate and colon."* Most doctors say that you only need about 15 minutes of exposure to do the trick, but don't forget to apply a water-resistant broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher.

*FOR NATIONAL OBSERVANCES SOURCE: National Today. December holidays. Accessed July 20, 2026.
*FOR SUNSHINE AND IMMUNITY SOURCE: Georgetown University. Study finds surprise benefit of sunshine. May 16, 2017. Accessed July 20, 2026.
*FOR VITAMIN D AND CANCER PREVENTION SOURCE: Lipman F. Strengthen your viral defenses with vitamin D. Dr. Frank Lipman. May 18, 2020. Accessed July 20, 2026.

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2. **Sunlight can help your mood.** If you feel down in the winter, you're not alone. Half a million people in the U.S. have seasonal affective disorder (SAD) and 10 to 20 percent of people deal with a less severe case of the winter blues, says the Cleveland Clinic.* Why? Sunlight has been shown to help improve your mood, which may help keep those feel-good vibes going strong all year long. If you need some extra help, you can try light therapy on those days when the sun is hiding behind the clouds.

3. **Sunlight may help to energize you.** In addition to boosting your mood, sunlight may help improve your energy levels. Hormone expert Dr. Anna Cabeca, states "When your eyes detect light, that tells your brain to wake up and release the cortisol you need to increase your metabolism and get through your day."* Does this explain why we may have trouble staying awake at work in the winter?

4. **Sunlight may help you live longer.** Getting some sunlight year-round may help you live a longer, happier life. In one study, researchers found that women who had the least amount of sun exposure over a 20-year period had a mortality rate that was twice as high as women who had the highest amount of sun exposure.* Even though It may be cold outside, making an effort to get your sun fix can be important for your health. Just remember to apply water-resistant broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher if you're outside longer than 15 minutes (XOXO, beauty editors everywhere).





## IN-SEASON PRODUCE*

- Artichokes are a source of fiber.
- Broccoli is a source of vitamins C and K.
- Brussel sprouts are a good source of folate, vitamin K, vitamin C and fiber.
- Carrots are a source of fiber and vitamin A.
- Kale is a source of vitamin C, vitamin K and minerals.
- Citrus fruits (including blood oranges, mandarins and grapefruits) are good sources of vitamin C.
- Cranberries are a source of fiber and vitamin C.


*FOR SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER SOURCE: Cleveland Clinic. Seasonal depression (Seasonal affective disorder). April 10, 2022. Accessed July 20, 2026.
*FOR LIGHT AND CORTISOL SOURCE: Cabeca A. The health benefit of seeing sunrises and sunsets. Sleep better! Dr. Anna Cabeca: The Girlfriend Doctor. June 16, 2021. Accessed July 20, 2026.
*FOR SUNLIGHT EXPOSURE SOURCE: Harvard Health Publishing. Here's something unexpected: Sunbathers live longer. June 6, 2016. Accessed July 20, 2026.
*FOR IN-SEASON PRODUCE SOURCE: Bailey MM. What's in season: December produce guide. Center for Science in the Public Interest. November 1, 2024. Accessed July 20, 2026.


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# Staying healthy in the winter

## 10 ways to enjoy the holidays*



The holiday season can be a stressful time. You may have to see your relatives or sleep in your old bedroom again. And there's so much food! The key to surviving and thriving through the holidays? Be prepared

To help you prepare, you can use this list to survive any thing the holiday season can throw at you!

1. **Breathe**. When we are stressed or anxious, our breathing can become shallower, which can have a negative effect on our moods and bodies. Taking a deep breath can help us calm down and help lower our heart rate and blood pressure. Here's one way to do it: Take a deep breath in through your nose for a count of 3, hold it for a count of 3 and then exhale through your mouth for a count of 6.

2. **Eat healthy and exercise.** During the holidays, it's important to eat a balanced diet and stay active. These things can help you manage stress and regulate your emotions. Taking a walk and managing your portion sizes are two ways to help stay healthy.

3. **Cope ahead.** Expect the unexpected during the holidays. Maybe an unplanned guest shows up to your party, or you burn your signature cookies. If something stressful happens, remember to take a step back and notice your reaction while taking slow deep breaths. Come up with some reassuring or encouraging statements ahead of time. During stressful times, you can repeat these statements to yourself. You can tell yourself things like, "I'm doing the best I can," "Take it one step at a time," or "I can handle this."

4. **Contribute.** Give a gift, volunteer or do something thoughtful for someone else. In addition to making someone else happy, giving back to others can help you feel good, too. Sometimes giving back can also help us find meaning and gain a different perspective.

5. **Laugh**. During the holidays, there are plenty of times for laughter. Laughter changes our body chemistry and can even help change our perspectives in helpful ways.

6. **Prioritize**. Make sure to prioritize what's really important on your to-do list this holiday season. Remember to take it one step at a time.

7. **Practice gratitude.** Recognizing what you're grateful for may help decrease stress by reminding you what's going right. Before you go to bed, try writing down some things you were thankful for during the day.

*FOR 10 WAYS TO ENJOY THE HOLIDAYS SOURCE: Fleurish Psychology. **10 ways to survive the holidays.** Accessed July 20, 2026.

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# Staying healthy in the winter

## 10 ways to enjoy the holidays *continued*

**8. Create an escape plan.** Make sure to schedule in breaks between stressful holiday activities. And if you're going to an event that may be stressful, figure out a couple of ways to remove yourself from the situation to give yourself a break. If you're hosting an event, make sure to keep one bedroom off-limits to guests. That room can be a quiet space to take some time for yourself.

**9. Journal.** Sometimes the holidays can be stressful because we're balancing so many things. You can try taking a few minutes each day to write down what's on your mind. Putting your thoughts on paper may help clear your mind and decrease stress.

**10. Treat yourself.** Pick out a few self-care activities you can easily do. Keep your favorite lotion or essential oil in your bag, then pull it out when you feel stressed. Set aside time every week for something you love, like enjoying a bubble bath, reading a book or enjoying a hobby. Make sure to take care of yourself!

## Writing for better health

### *Health benefits of journaling*

Need to find some time to sneak away from the hustle and bustle of the holiday season this year? This may be a good opportunity to take up journaling. Or maybe you will be restarting an old habit from your childhood. Remember the "dear diary" days?

Well, it turns out journaling is good for your health and is tool you should consider adding to your self-care routine. Especially during the holiday time. Journaling has many health benefits and can help you to understand your thoughts and feelings better.

Don't over think it and keep it simple. Set aside a few minutes each day to write. If it's too hard to remember to write in a journal, consider keeping a digital journal on your phone.*

Below are some health benefits for journaling:*

- Reduces stress
- Improves immune function
- Keeps memory sharp
- Boosts mood
- Strengthens emotional function



*FOR JOURNALING TIPS SOURCE: University of Rochester Medicine. Journaling for Emotional Wellness. Accessed July 20, 2026.
*FOR BENEFITS OF JOURNALING SOURCE: Intermountain Health. 5 powerful health benefits of journaling. November 17, 2023. Accessed July 20, 2026.

# Recipe – Gingerbread baked oats*

*Yield: 6 servings*



## Ingredients

- 2 cups whole milk, plus 1 ½ tablespoons divided, plus more as needed
- 1 large ripe banana, mashed
- 2 large eggs
- 3 tablespoons dark brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract, plus ½ teaspoon divided
- 1 ½ teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- ¼ teaspoon ground allspice
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cloves
- ⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 2 ½ cups old-fashioned rolled oats
- 3 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1 tablespoon confectioners' sugar, plus more for garnish

### Nutrition profile (per serving):

- Calories: 358
- Fats: 15 grams
- Carbs: 42 grams
- Protein: 10 grams

## Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Coat an 8-inch baking dish with cooking spray.
2. Whisk 2 cups milk, the mashed banana, 2 eggs, 3 tablespoons dark brown sugar, 2 tablespoons melted butter, 1 tablespoon vanilla, 1½ teaspoons cinnamon, 1 teaspoon baking powder, 1 teaspoon ginger, ¼ teaspoon allspice, ¼ teaspoon salt, ⅛ teaspoon cloves and ⅛ teaspoon nutmeg in a large bowl until combined. Fold in 2½ cups oats.
3. Transfer the oat mixture to the prepared pan; spread in an even layer and let stand until slightly thickened, about 15 minutes. Bake until set, about 30 minutes. Let cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes.
4. Meanwhile, whisk 3 ounces cream cheese, 1 tablespoon confectioners' sugar and the remaining 1½ tablespoons milk and ½ teaspoon vanilla in a small bowl, adding milk (½ teaspoon at a time.), to reach desired consistency. (You may not use all the milk.) Drizzle mixture over the oats. Sift more confectioners' sugar over the top, if desired.

These gingerbread baked oats bring cozy spices and comfort to the breakfast table. A ripe banana and dark brown sugar add sweetness, while warm spices like ginger, cinnamon and cloves give the oats classic gingerbread flavor. It's a breakfast you can make ahead of time, which is perfect for busy mornings and still feels special enough for a weekend brunch. Need more reasons to make this recipe? Fiber-rich oats help support digestion and keep you feeling full. You can bake it once and enjoy easy breakfasts throughout the week!

*FOR GINGERBREAD BAKED OATS RECIPE SOURCE: Ruff C. Gingerbread baked oats. EatingWell. December 17, 2025. Accessed July 20, 2026.

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