



# Alive & WELL

**WPS**  
HEALTH INSURANCE®

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## Don't Be SAD—Chase Those Winter Blues Away

From early October through winter's end, the reduced hours of natural daylight can affect some people's mood, energy, activity level, and motivation to engage socially. Sufferers report feeling depressed. We call this condition Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

People with SAD produce too much melatonin, the hormone that helps regulate our circadian rhythms (those biological cycles that reoccur in 24-hour intervals) and activities such as sleep. This disruption of the internal body clock can lead to depressive symptoms.

If you have experienced episodes of depression that clearly begin in fall or winter and end in the spring or summer, you may have SAD. Avoid self-diagnosis and find out for sure. See your doctor promptly if you experience SAD symptoms or any other depression-related concerns, as treatment is available.

It's also possible that you are suffering from a decidedly less serious condition—one known simply as “the winter blues.” In that case, the following activities, behaviors, and methods may reduce your symptoms:

- Make a point to spend time outdoors at least once a day.
- Schedule morning walks outside so you can enjoy the daylight and sun.
- For at least 30 minutes a day, incorporate exercise that warms your body and increases your energy. For example, take Bikram Yoga (yoga practiced in a heated room), water aerobics in a heated pool, or a spinning class.
- Eat a variety of foods, particularly nutrient-dense foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein. This will help you feel more energized.
- Stay socially active and engaged with family and friends. Make an effort to connect with others during the winter months to reduce feelings of seclusion.
- Make your home and work environments brighter and happier. Surround yourself with photos of memories from spring and summer fun, paint a room or wall in your home a bright yellow, add plants and flowers for decoration, and sit in the sun when it shines through the window.
- Most importantly, start implementing these suggestions early in the fall and winter, before the symptoms appear.

Contributor: Emily Moenck

Sources: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/seasonal-affective-disorder/DS00195>

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0002499/>

<http://www.webmd.com/depression/guide/seasonal-affective-disorder>

## The Potential of Solar Power

Light. Warmth. A golden-brown tan. It's amazing what the sun can provide. And that's especially true for energy.

The amount of solar energy that reaches the Earth's surface is so vast that in just one year, it measures about twice as much as will ever be obtained from all of the Earth's non-renewable resources of coal, oil, natural gas, and mined uranium combined. So how can we harness this energy to power our world? The answer is photovoltaic (PV) cells—commonly known as solar panels.

The technology behind PV cells has made great strides since its invention in 1954. Even since 2008, PV cells have seen a 60% reduction in cost and a dramatic increase in efficiency.

To illustrate the potential for this renewable technology, consider the 950-acre Sarnia Photovoltaic Power Plant in Ontario, Canada—the world's largest solar power plant. Each year, the Sarnia plant produces 120,000 megawatt-hours (MWh) of electricity. For reference, according to Madison's Energy Task Force, Dane County residents used approximately 840,000 MWh in 2002. So a power plant like Sarnia, which occupies an area a little larger than a square mile, could provide about 14% of Dane County's residential power needs. A rough extrapolation suggests that a solar power plant approximately 10 square miles (less than 1% of the land area in Dane County) would provide 100% of Dane County's residential power needs.

Clearly, solar power has enormous potential, yet there are still several hurdles to overcome. For example, electricity is not produced at night and production can be severely limited on cloudy days. Solar-



generated electricity can be stored in batteries, but this process can incur an energy loss of more than 10%. Also, PV cells generate direct-current (DC) electricity, which requires conversion to alternating current (AC) before it is transmitted to its users, and this can also incur significant losses.

Despite these challenges, the potential for solar power is huge as costs decrease and efficiency increases. For more information about solar energy in Wisconsin and to learn how to install your very own residential PV system, visit:

[www.cityofmadison.com/sustainability/city/madison/](http://www.cityofmadison.com/sustainability/city/madison/)

[www.midwestrenew.org](http://www.midwestrenew.org)

Guest Contributor Adam Both, Environmental Engineer for Leggette, Brashears & Graham, Inc.

Source: [www.cityofmadison.com/sustainability/city/madison/](http://www.cityofmadison.com/sustainability/city/madison/)

[www.midwestrenew.org](http://www.midwestrenew.org)

# Warm Up Your Winter Holiday with a Vacation in the Sun!

The holidays are a wonderful time to spend with family and friends. Yet when Wisconsin's winters take hold, the bitter-cold temperatures can feel anything but festive. If a warm vacation with your loved ones sounds like just the ticket for you, here are some tips to help you get started.

**Plan ahead:** Plan 6 to 12 months in advance so everyone in your party can take off from work and tend to commitments at home. This will also give you time to save money for the trip.

**Choose smart:** Select a destination that fits your family's needs. Do you want a busy resort with lots of activities, or a secluded getaway where you can relax?

**Do your research:** Vacations don't have to be expensive. Look for deals on the Web or see a travel agent. Also, consider a place you may want to visit again. Going to the same place each year makes traveling easier because you'll be familiar with the area.

**Be flexible:** Remember that travel can be unpredictable and your trip may not stay precisely on schedule, especially if you're flying. Knowing this will prepare you to handle these situations better if and when they arise.

**Keep holiday traditions:** The sight of green grass in winter and palm trees draped in Christmas lights may seem disorienting at first. Make your family feel at home by partaking in some of the same holiday activities you normally would if you were home. Bake traditional holiday desserts, cook special meals, bring a small tree to decorate, play familiar games, or create new traditions on your trip. Maybe holiday travel itself could become a tradition for your family.













Contributor: Sarah Both



## Stress Buster: Sun Salutations

Surya Namaskara is the Sanskrit name for "Sun Salutations" and means bowing to the sun. There are many versions of the Sun Salutation, but universally it is a time to work on a smooth, steady flow of movement in time with your breath.

Take your time moving through each of the 12 postures below. As you move, try to let go of your problems and be thankful for all that is good in your life. With time and practice, your flow will become smoother, your breath deeper, and your mental release greater.

<p><b>1. Mountain</b></p>  <p>Begin by standing in Mountain pose, feet about hip-width apart, hands either by your sides or in prayer position. Take several deep breaths.</p>	<p><b>2. Hands Up</b></p>  <p>On your next inhale, in one sweeping movement, raise your arms up overhead and gently arch back as far as feels comfortable and safe.</p>	<p><b>3. Head to Knee</b></p>  <p>As you exhale, bend forward, bending the knees if necessary, and bring your hands to rest beside your feet.</p>
<p><b>4. Lunge</b></p>  <p>Inhale and step the right leg back</p>	<p><b>5. Plank</b></p>  <p>Exhale and step the left leg back into plank position. Hold the position and inhale.</p>	<p><b>6. Stick</b></p>  <p>Exhale and lower yourself as if coming down from a pushup. Only your hands and feet should touch the floor.</p>
<p><b>7. Upward Dog</b></p>  <p>Inhale and stretch forward and up, bending at the waist. Use your arms to lift your torso, but only bend back as far as feels comfortable. Lift your legs up so that only the tops of your feet and your hands touch the floor. It's okay to keep your arms bent at the elbow.</p>	<p><b>8. Downward Dog</b></p>  <p>Exhale, lift from the hips and push back and up.</p>	<p><b>9. Lunge</b></p>  <p>Inhale and step the right foot forward.</p>
<p><b>10. Head to Knee</b></p>  <p>Exhale, bring the left foot forward and step into head-to-knee position.</p>	<p><b>11. Hands Up</b></p>  <p>Inhale and rise slowly while keeping arms extended.</p>	<p><b>12. Mountain</b></p>  <p>Exhale, and in a slow, sweeping motion, lower your arms to the sides. End by bringing your hands up into prayer position. Repeat the sequence, stepping with the left leg.</p>

Sequence from <http://yogasite.com/sunsalute.htm>

Contributor: WPS Wellness Team

# Look to the Sun and Food for the Vitamin D You Need

While Vitamin D may lack the “cool” factor of other vitamins such as C and E, there’s no doubting its importance to our health. Specifically, Vitamin D aids in the absorption of calcium, helping us to maintain strong bones. Research suggests it may help to protect us against osteoporosis, high blood pressure, cancer, and some autoimmune diseases. So it’s important to get adequate amounts of Vitamin D each day.

Some people don’t. Today, approximately 10 percent of American adults are vitamin-D deficient. The leading reasons: they don’t consume enough food sources that contain vitamin D; they receive limited exposure to ultraviolet (UVB) rays; they have darker skin pigment; they have functional issues with their kidneys that prohibit vitamin D conversion; they have digestive issues that do not allow their bodies to absorb vitamin D; or they may be obese.

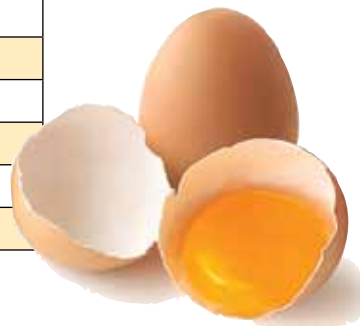
Some of these reasons are preventable, particularly those related to sun exposure and nutrition.

Did you know that the sun is a great source of vitamin D? Without a doubt, sunlight is the single largest source of vitamin D for most people. UVB rays come in contact with the skin and begin vitamin D synthesis. Simple, right? Well, not for everyone. People who live above 40 degrees north latitude—north of Kansas City, Missouri, for example—may receive much less exposure to UVB rays in winter, severely limiting their production of vitamin D for much of the year.

Which brings us to nutrition. Vitamin D naturally occurs in few foods, which is why it is added to many. Tracking your dietary intake of vitamin D on a daily basis is a great idea. Use the chart below to guide your daily intake.

Age	Male	Female	Pregnant/Lactating
0–12 months	400 IU (10 mcg)	400 IU (10 mcg)	
1–13 years	600 IU (15 mcg)	600 IU (15 mcg)	
14–18 years	600 IU (15 mcg)	600 IU (15 mcg)	600 IU (15 mcg)
19–50 years	600 IU (15 mcg)	600 IU (15 mcg)	600 IU (15 mcg)
51–70 years	600 IU (15 mcg)	600 IU (15 mcg)	
>70 years	800 IU (20 mcg)	4800 IU (20 mcg)	

IU = international units. mcg = microgram, or one-millionth of a gram.



## What foods contain vitamin D? The following are good sources:

Food	IUs per Serving*	Percent of Daily Value (DV)**
Cod liver oil, 1 tablespoon	1,360	340
Salmon (sockeye), cooked, 3 ounces	447	112
Mackerel, cooked, 3 ounces	388	97
Tuna fish, canned in water, drained, 3 ounces	154	39
Orange juice fortified with vitamin D, 1 cup (check product labels, as amount of added vitamin D varies)	137	34
Milk, nonfat, reduced fat, and whole, vitamin D-fortified, 1 cup	115–124	29–31
Yogurt, fortified with 20% of the DV for vitamin D, 6 ounces (more heavily fortified yogurts provide more of the DV)	88	22
Margarine, fortified, 1 tablespoon	60	15
Liver, beef, cooked, 3.5 ounces	49	12
Sardines, canned in oil, drained, 2 sardines	46	12
Egg, 1 large (vitamin D is found in yolk)	41	10
Ready-to-eat cereal, fortified with 10% of the DV for vitamin D, 0.75–1 cup (more heavily fortified cereals might provide more of the DV)	40	10
Cheese, Swiss, 1 ounce	6	2

Vitamin D supplements are also an option, but never begin taking any supplements without first speaking with your doctor.

Contributor: Emily Moenck

## SUNNY SNACK BAR

Total Preparation Time: 15 minutes  
 Actual Cooking Time: 45 minutes  
 Number of Servings: Single  
 Special Features: Kids can help!  
 Nutrition Content: Low fat and sodium  
 Meal Type: Snack

### Ingredients

2 cups carrots, finely shredded, about 3 medium carrots  
 1/4 cup dried apricots, chopped  
 1/2 cup golden raisins  
 2 cups quick-cooking oats  
 1/2 cup walnuts, chopped  
 1 12-oz. can apple juice concentrate, thawed  
 Pinch of cinnamon

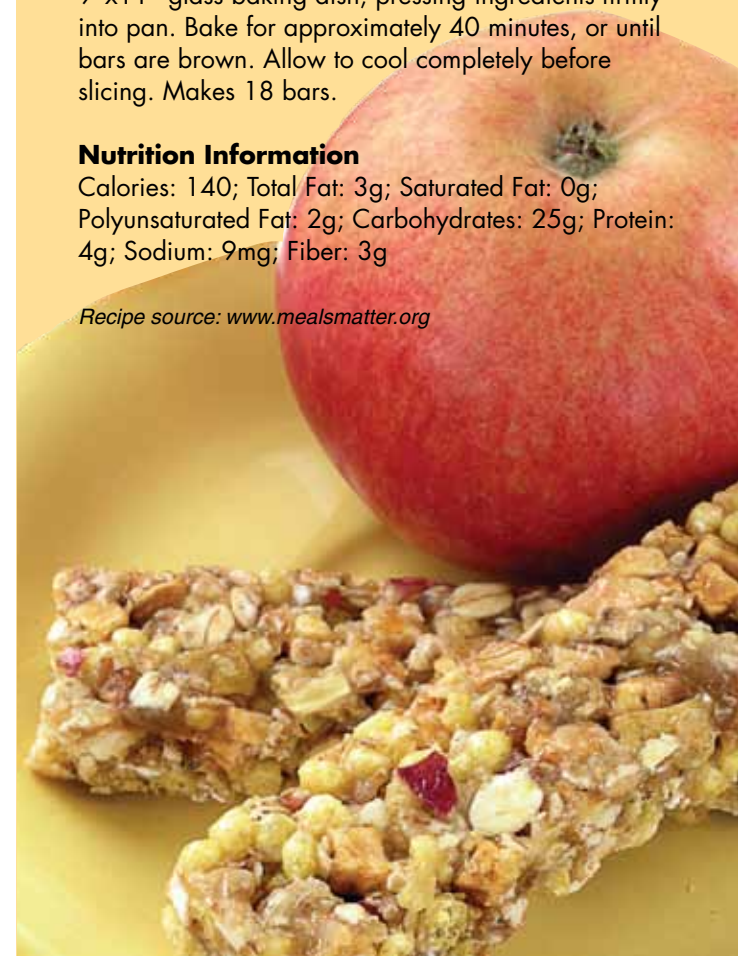
### Preparation

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Combine all dry ingredients and mix well. Add apple juice concentrate and stir until evenly moistened. Place in a greased 9"x11" glass baking dish, pressing ingredients firmly into pan. Bake for approximately 40 minutes, or until bars are brown. Allow to cool completely before slicing. Makes 18 bars.

### Nutrition Information

Calories: 140; Total Fat: 3g; Saturated Fat: 0g; Polyunsaturated Fat: 2g; Carbohydrates: 25g; Protein: 4g; Sodium: 9mg; Fiber: 3g

Recipe source: [www.mealsmatter.org](http://www.mealsmatter.org)



### Sources:

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## HEALTH ACTION CENTER

Visit the WPS Health Center and take a more active role in your health. Search the Healthwise Knowledgebase to find answers to your health questions, use our interactive symptom checker when you have an illness or injury, and get tips for living a healthier lifestyle. Every topic is reviewed by medical experts and based on the most reliable, up-to-date information.

Below we've highlighted some tools and resources from the Healthwise Knowledgebase to get you started. **Just visit the Health Center on the WPS website to access the links.**



### Itchy and scratchy

First it itches. Then you scratch. And then your skin breaks into a rash ... which itches. So you scratch. And so on ... This is the painful cycle of atopic dermatitis, also called eczema. **Visit the WPS Health Center on the WPS website to take action, and take care of your skin.**

### Skin deep

Your skin is not only the largest organ you have, but it's your protector ... wrapping your body in a sensitive guard against the elements. Your skin lets you know when something feels hot or cold, soft or hard, painful or nice. It also can tell others how you're feeling emotionally. And it can save your life by giving you early warning signs of underlying diseases and other conditions affecting your health. **Visit the WPS Health Center on the WPS website to find out what your skin might be telling you.**

### Red in the face

If your face is red often, it may be more than blushing. You could have rosacea. Rosacea is a skin disease that can be annoying and sometimes embarrassing. And it can get worse if it's untreated. **Visit the WPS Health Center on the WPS website to learn more.** And be sure to check out the rosacea diary checklist. It will help you and your doctor come up with a treatment plan that's right for you.

## We Want to Hear from You

We value your feedback and suggestions. How can we improve the *Alive & Well* newsletter? If you have questions, comments, or suggestions, please contact Jeff Hlavacka, senior coordinator of preventive health services, at (608) 226-7869 or email [jeff.hlavacka@wpsic.com](mailto:jeff.hlavacka@wpsic.com).

## Meet the WPS Wellness Team



**JEFF HLAVACKA**, senior coordinator of preventive health services

Jeff graduated from University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, earning his bachelor of science degree in exercise physiology with minors in health education and sports coaching. Jeff holds certifications in personal training, group exercise, tobacco cessation, and worksite wellness management.



**EMILY MOENCK**, health promotion specialist

Emily has a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point in health promotion and wellness and a graduate certificate from the Medical College of Wisconsin in public health. Before joining WPS, Emily spent four years with Kohler Co. working on occupational safety and wellness initiatives. She is also a certified American Lung Association Freedom from Smoking facilitator.



**SARAH BOTH**, health promotion specialist

Sarah graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee with a bachelor's degree in kinesiology and a submajor in exercise and fitness. She received her wellness coach certificate from the Health for Life Institute, and is also certified in ACE group exercise, Turbo Kick, PiYo™, and yoga.

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