

Winter Wellness Tips

Just because it's cold outside doesn't mean you have to hibernate. Here are some tips for staying physically and emotionally healthy during the winter season.

Raise your vitamin D levels naturally

We've all heard about the marvels of vitamin D: heart health, skin health, immune health, mental health.... But, you don't need to supplement or risk skin cancer to get high vitamin D levels. The big secret is that vitamin D levels are associated with healthy lifestyle changes. For example, if you lose just 5 percent or more of your body weight, your vitamin D blood levels will shoot up. Vitamin D likes to stay in fatty tissue, so when you lose fat, the D levels in your blood go up. Other ways to increase D naturally are to lower your cholesterol, exercise and eat more fatty fish, such as wild salmon. Other good food sources are trout, tuna, mushrooms, egg yolks and plain Greek yogurt.



Take a class with a friend

Winter can be a tough time for many of us. All that darkness can take its toll on our mental health. Plus, humans are social animals that don't do well in isolation, and the winter months can be very isolating for many people. To keep the winter blues at bay, sign up for a yoga, cooking, sewing or scrapbooking class with a friend. Not only do these kinds of classes improve your mental and physical fitness, but they help to fill that social craving that we have as human beings, too.

Eat nuts and vegetables — the ones that are sources of omega-3 fatty acids

One of the primary omega-3 fatty acids, called alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), is found in many plants and plant-based cooking oils. Vegetables high in ALA include brussels sprouts and cauliflower. Flaxseed (powder or oil), chia seeds and walnuts are especially good sources of ALA. Recent research suggests that omega-3s have anti-inflammatory effects, skin protection and hydrating impacts, as well as some cardiovascular disease prevention and, perhaps, even some impacts on mental health. For example, an 18-year Harvard Nurses' Health Study of almost 77,000 women found a reduced risk of depression in those with moderate intakes of plant-based omega-3 fatty acids.

Prioritize sleep

It is amazing how much more overwhelming things can seem when you are tired. A good night's sleep (or nap!) rejuvenates, helps reduce stress and keeps your immune system in fighting shape. While there is no "magic number" for number of hours to sleep, the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute recommends between 7-8 hours for adults.

Exercise

It's no secret that our bodies need to move to stay fit. When it comes to exercise, don't let your excuses get in the way. Develop a well-rounded fitness routine that includes cardio, such as walking and strength training with light weights. New to exercise? Make an agreement to remain active for at least 20 minutes a day for 21 days. However, there is a catch, if you miss a day, you must start back at day one and proceed again.

Reduce Stress

A stressed system is more susceptible to illness. You can eat greens, get proper sleep and eat more probiotics but if you're constantly worrying, your immune system will have to choose between combating the stress or succumbing to the bad bug you caught. Think about it. Take it easy. Enjoy this time of year by eating warm, home-cooked foods and rest and relax more.



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Community Calendars

Alpha-1 Foundation Education Days

February 28
Portland, OR

March 14
Raleigh-Durham, NC

To find out more about conferences and support groups, visit the Alpha-1 Foundation website at www.alpha1.org or call toll-free: (888) 825-7421, ext. 331.

Alpha-1 Foundation Events Calendar

March 7 – Celtic Connection
Newton, MA

April 27 – Friends For A Cure Golf Event
Jacksonville, FL

May 2 – George Washington Bridge Walk
New York/New Jersey

To find out more about these or other events in your area, log on to www.alpha1.org or call toll-free: (888) 825-7421, ext. 233.

For Your Information...

Your AlphaNet Coordinator is a great resource, whether you are a newly diagnosed Alpha or a long-time AlphaNet subscriber. Take advantage of his/her expertise.

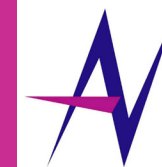
Check out the "Questions to Ask Your Coordinator" pamphlet and other FAQ's at www.alphanet.org.

Story Ideas?

Do you have an interesting story that you think would make a great article for an upcoming issue of *The AlphaNetter*?

If so, please submit any ideas, comments and/or suggestions to Christine Lanser at clanser@alphanet.org.

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The AlphaNetter

Alpha Builds Custom Scooter to Aid Mobility

Alpha Calvin Neumann isn't letting the hilly terrain around his Winston-Salem, North Carolina home stop him from moving about town. In fact, thanks to a little ingenuity and a lot of dedication, Cal is maintaining an active lifestyle with the help of his custom-built mobility scooter.

Cal, who is 76 years old and a self-professed "car nut," decided to build a unique scooter using the experience he had gained restoring several classic cars in the past.

"I decided a couple of years ago to build my own mobility scooter in the shape of a 1901 curved dash Oldsmobile," Neumann said.

The process of building the scooter proved to be time intensive, as Cal had to obtain his materials from many sources. "The shop project took some time, with everything from re-spoked bicycles wheels to a hand-built frame, suspension and steering."

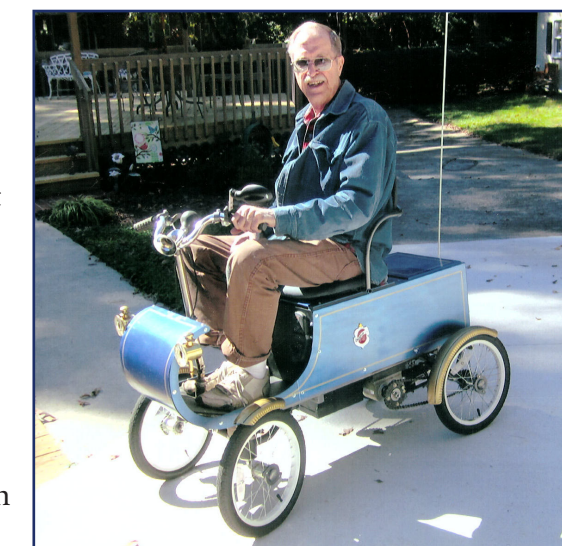
Cal chose to use mostly recycled materials on his scooter and he points out that there are only a few parts that are 'stock' on his "Calsmobile" — the name he has given his scooter. "The motors and batteries are from a donated power wheelchair and the rest are handmade or custom modified," Cal noted.

Cal, a ZZ whose FEV1 level is about 33%, finds that his Calsmobile has given him increased mobility, provided that he lives in a hilly region and can no longer mountain climb or even walk the hills around his North Carolina Piedmont-area home.

"I use my scooter as much as I can. It can climb the hills here, so visiting my family and neighbors and getting to the grocery store at the corner are now easy, as well as fun," Cal said.

While Cal may not be able to climb mountains anymore, he certainly isn't letting his Alpha-1 stand in the way of his passion for building and restoring cars and for exploring his beautiful North Carolina neighborhood.

It seems evident that Cal won't be slowing down anytime soon now that he has his trusty Calsmobile to get him around town!



Cal Neumann on his "Calsmobile" scooter

New Year, New You: Nutrition Guide for Alphas



The start of a new year is the perfect time to revamp your dietary habits and eliminate unhealthy foods from your diet. Below are some recommendations for nutritious eating that are specifically geared toward Alphas:

- Eat whole, fresh foods and avoid processed foods whenever possible.
- Avoid fast food — but if you must go, eat the salads with light dressing and grilled chicken.
- Fill a container of fresh-cut vegetables at the start of each week to have as an easy and healthy snack.
- Drink plenty of water (eight 8 oz. glasses per day). Go easy on juices since they often contain high concentrations of sugar.
- Avoid or limit foods that can cause heartburn or gas, as bloating can make breathing more difficult.
- Eating several small meals throughout the day is easier on the digestive system, and uses less energy (leaving you with more energy for breathing).
- Cured meats such as bacon, sausage and processed meats are high in nitrates and are more likely to impair lung function.
- Limit refined foods and sugars. Examples include: white rice, white bread, mashed potatoes, pasta made from white flour and anything labeled “instant.” Refining removes the bran and most of the nutrients, leaving very little nutritional value. Additionally, these foods force the body to focus on digestion instead of breathing. Instead, choose brown rice, whole wheat breads, whole wheat pastas and steel-cut oatmeal.
- Fish oil is a natural anti-inflammatory, which can assist with easing the inflammation associated with chronic lung disease. If you can't tolerate fish oil, substitutes may include flaxseed oil, evening primrose oil, borage oil or a combination of oils available in most pharmacies and health food stores.
- Whole grains are full of B vitamins and help keep your digestive system moving and healthy. Oat bran is known to reduce cholesterol. Fiber provides bulk to the digestive system and allows it to function more efficiently.
- Take a good multi-vitamin and multi-mineral. Make sure it has ample amounts of antioxidant vitamins C and E.
- Keep a food diary for a week to see what you are actually eating.
- Opt for plain yogurt and add your own fruit or fiber (such as slivered almonds or rolled oats).
- When they are available, fresh fruits and vegetables are best, but canned and frozen will substitute well in the off seasons.

AlphaNet Welcomes New Coordinators



Buzz Trevathan

Prior to joining AlphaNet as a Prolastin Coordinator, Buzz Trevathan served as an army officer, an engineering manager and an art gallery owner. He presently makes his home in Santa Fe, New Mexico with his wife, Pam.

After years of being told that he was experiencing the early stages of emphysema, it came as a shock to Trevathan when he was finally diagnosed with Alpha-1 in May 2008. Following his diagnosis, he retired as owner of a Native American art gallery, which he and his family had purchased in 1992, and began augmentation therapy. Trevathan's association with AlphaNet has helped him realize that, despite his diagnosis, he can continue to live a full and productive life.



Carla Ladig

Carla Ladig was inspired to join AlphaNet thanks to the support she received from her own Coordinator. The Fort Wayne, Indiana-native and single mother of two “boys,” Kyle (her son) and Finnegan (her dog), was diagnosed with Alpha-1 in October 2013 after being admitted to the hospital with a spontaneous pneumothorax. Lucky for Ladig, the nurse practitioner on call was an Alpha-1 carrier who recognized her symptoms and encouraged her to get tested.

A former smoker of 22 years, Ladig quit the same day she was diagnosed, and started augmentation therapy a few months after. As a Prolastin Coordinator, she hopes to refocus her customer service skills in order to make a positive impact.



Dan Hicks

Dan Hicks joins AlphaNet as a Prolastin Coordinator after 31 years of service as a vehicle test driver for General Motors. He and his wife, Robin, live in Clarkston, Michigan and have two sons, two daughters and one grandson.

Hicks began experiencing shortness of breath seven years ago and was diagnosed with asthma by his family physician. In February 2013, following his physician's suggestion to see a pulmonologist, Hicks was diagnosed with Alpha-1 and started augmentation therapy two weeks later.

Hicks became passionate about educating himself and others about Alpha-1. He attends local support group meetings, participates in Alpha-1 fundraisers and maintains an active, healthy lifestyle.



Judy Schiewer

Judy Schiewer is excited to join the AlphaNet team as a Prolastin Coordinator. She and her husband of 36 years, Pat, live in Greenfield, Indiana.

Schiewer's journey to her Alpha-1 diagnosis did not involve her going from doctor to doctor. It started with her 28-year-old brother, Mark, who struggled while taking part in a routine company physical. Mark was sent to a pulmonologist and was diagnosed with Alpha-1. Schiewer's entire family was then tested. Schiewer and her two sisters were also diagnosed.

Following her diagnosis, Schiewer began augmentation therapy, which has allowed her to appreciate each day a little more. In addition to talking to her fellow Alphas, she enjoys spending time with her three children.



Bob Nichols

Prior to joining AlphaNet as a Zemaira Coordinator, Bob Nichols served as a Professional Paramedic/Firefighter for almost 27 years. Born and raised in Maryland, Nichols spent countless hours volunteering in his community.

After years of experiencing symptoms which doctors believed were due to his years of firefighting, Nichols was finally diagnosed with Alpha-1 in 2007. Over the next three years, Nichols' health began to decline rapidly.

In 2010, Nichols received a double lung transplant, which he says provided him with a new lease on life. Nichols is committed to providing the same support that was given to him by his Coordinator and continuing the tradition of “Alphas Serving Alphas.”



Ric Logsdon

Ric Logsdon joins AlphaNet as a Zemaira Coordinator with an extensive background in Alpha-1 advocacy. Having experienced symptoms since the age of seven, the Louisville, Kentucky native was diagnosed with Alpha-1 in 2001.

After receiving false information about his diagnosis, Logsdon began to educate himself and other Alphas about living with Alpha-1 by speaking at support groups and with area doctors. He even went to Capitol Hill to speak with our nation's leaders about the important bills affecting Alpha-1 “Access to Care” issues.

Today, Logsdon continues to spread the positive message of living with Alpha-1, as well as the importance of early detection.

Clinical Corner

By: Teresa Kitchen, BSN, RN, AlphaNet Clinical Nurse Manager

This time of the year we are all more susceptible to respiratory illnesses. With that being said, we need to discuss good hand-washing technique, which is a simple practice that should be a part of maintaining basic hygiene. Studies have repeatedly confirmed that it is the best first-line defense against the spread of infection. Good hand-washing technique is not related to using an expensive antibacterial soap. The chief benefit of hand washing comes from the friction of rubbing your hands together and thorough rinsing. So, here are the steps:

- 1.) Wet your hands with WARM running water.
- 2.) Add soap and then rub your hands together, away from the running water, making lather. Continue for at least 20 seconds (or the time it takes to sing a verse of “Happy Birthday”) using a good amount of friction, rubbing the front and back of your hands, between your fingers and under your nails. Concentrate on your knuckles and don't forget your wrists.
- 3.) Rinse your hands well under warm, running water. Let the water run back into the sink.
- 4.) Dry your hands thoroughly on a clean towel, preferably a paper towel that can be easily disposed. Use the paper towel to shut off the faucets.

Carry hand sanitizer or antibacterial wipes with you, if possible. Washing with soap and water is, however, still preferable.

Stay warm and healthy this winter season!

Oxygen Considerations When Traveling By Air



- Check with different airlines regarding oxygen availability prior to booking your flight. Make arrangements for a wheelchair or motorized cart, if needed, at the time of booking. This will ensure easy transport through the airport from check-in, to the security gate, baggage claim and finally ground transportation.
- Confirm your travel itinerary with your airline verbally and in writing. Additionally, confirm that oxygen has been arranged to be on board for each segment of air travel. Verify one week in advance and, again, 48 hours prior to travel.
- If you require oxygen full-time, you will need to arrange with your oxygen provider for provisional oxygen for use while on the ground. This includes oxygen for transportation to connecting flights, in the event of a layover or delay, and from transport to baggage claim, group transportation and to your final destination.
- Here is a helpful website for locating airline seats with power outlets when traveling with a Portable Oxygen Concentrator: www.seatguru.com/articles/in-seat_laptop_power.php. One thing to always consider is what amperage the concentrators draw and whether the particular aircraft provides sufficient power. It is always best to have enough batteries, but with delays that happen without warning, this is a way to have some more assurance that you won't run low on oxygen.