



# MacLean & MacLean Financial

## Group Benefits News

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## 10 Holiday Health Tips

Don't let the stresses and excesses of the holiday season make you ill. Follow these 10 quick tips to stay well.

Along with parties and presents, the holiday season often brings stress, emotional turmoil, rich food, and late nights. All of these can affect your health and well-being. Follow these tips to feel your best throughout the holidays and after.

**Stay hydrated.** Water helps your body cleanse toxins and fight germs. With furnaces blasting, lots of party foods, and alcohol, your personal water table needs all the help it can get. Remember, caffeinated beverages and alcoholic drinks actually take water *out* of your system.

**Wash your hands.** You might be getting "sick" of hearing this, but frequent and thorough hand washing, or use of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, is the best way to prevent the spread of cold and flu viruses. It's especially important this time of year when you are around more people. And remember not to rub your eyes.

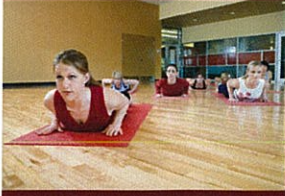
**Fit in fitness.** Unfortunately, when you're pressed for time you need exercise even more. At least do a few stretches every day. If possible, walk to some of your errands, work, or social events. Get the whole family out for a stroll after a big dinner. Plan a skating or tobogganing party instead of a house party.

**Sleep.** Another thing you have to fit in. Here's the choice: get your regular shut-eye or risk staying in bed because you're sick. Maybe you should set your alarm for going *to* bed.

**Just say no.** You can't do it all. Choose your priorities and then politely decline commitments that will put you over the top.

**Adjust your expectations.** Everything does not have to be perfect to make a memorable holiday gathering. Simply spending time with family and friends is the most important thing.

**Laugh it off.** Don't cry over spilt eggnog. Or your child breaking a "good" glass. Or your spouse arguing with your mother. Stuff happens. Relax. Laughter really is good for you.



**Easy on the alcohol.** It's tempting to over-indulge this time of year, but your body won't thank you. Make every second drink non-alcoholic, add sparkling water, or switch to tea or decaf coffee as the party winds down.

**Beware the buffet.** Microbes love parties. Watch out for food that is meant to be hot or cold but has been sitting at room temperature for more than two hours.

**Stick to your budget.** Money matters are a big stress factor. Make a strict shopping list, and a strict budget, and don't let those amazing sales tempt you to stray.

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## HOW TO BEAT THE BLAHS

Living Well readers share ways to keep the winter blues at bay. Hint: Toughing it out alone in the dark is not one of them.

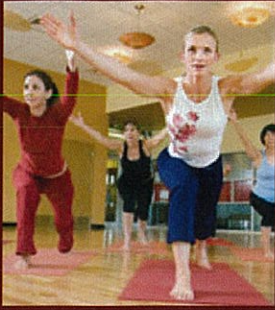
We Canadians love our changing seasons, but sometimes a winter that never seems to end or a long gray November can get us down. We asked Living Well readers how you beat "the blahs" and you shared some savvy ways to keep smiling through even the longest winter.

**Companionship** brightens many a dreary day, according to Living Well readers like Penelope E. "Come fall, I make sure that I get out and volunteer at one of my favorite places where the people are fun to be with. They always have a positive attitude that just has to rub off, and if any of us are having a down day, we talk about it and go home at the end of the day feeling better. That's the joy of having good friends!"

Aline T also finds joy in **volunteering**: "I volunteer once a week to help others and forget about the gloom."

Adina H enjoys a very young companion: "I spend a lot of time with my six-month-old nephew. He's a happy little baby, and it's not hard to get him smiling."

Many readers also said **exercise** boosts their spirits. Of course it can be easier to find excuses not to exercise in winter. Here's a fine Canadian solution from Candyce M: "Wondering how to beat the blahs? Go curling – no need to worry about inclement weather, the place is climate controlled. Innovations in active wear ensure that you can play the game in warmth and comfort without massive bulk. Curlers are known to be some of the friendliest folks around and most are willing to help any beginner to achieve the skill level required to have fun. (It's not that much.) Fun, friends, exercise – no blahs here!"



Brian T also recommends the **exercise/friends** combination: "I started senior puck and stick skating a few years ago – great for the heart and making new friends. On top of this quite a few of us curl."

**Pets** are another popular mood booster. Jo-Ann L points out that canine companionship combines well with exercise too. "When I get home from work I take my dog for a long walk and when we reach the open field we get a really good run in chasing each other. This gives me a good laugh dodging the dog. All the running warms us up very well in the cold weather and we both stay healthy and happy for the rest of the day. We do the same each day and no blahs anymore."

Donna T enjoys pets in a cozier scenario: "I use a light that is like the sun. I read good books cuddled up in bed with my three Yorkies with a heated throw on. I also knit things for others. The smile it puts on their faces is as bright as the sun."

Roxanne M also recommends **light therapy**: "For years I have experienced the blues. They usually begin about the 1st of December and last several months. Sometimes the winters became unbearable and depression was severe.... For the past several years I have used light therapy. I spend 15 minutes each morning in front of my light therapy box and it helps me get through the day. My energy level is increased and I can finally manage to get through the winter without feelings of hopelessness."

Mary D adds some **dietary tips**: "I take a daily dose of an Omega 3 supplement and a cod liver oil capsule. I also use a special therapy light. I let in as much natural sunlight into my home as possible. I force myself to go outside for a walk in fresh air. I try hard to eat a well balanced diet with mainly home cooking from scratch with fresh and frozen vegetables, lean meats, whole grain products and minimal processed foods."

Many of you, like Maureen S, mentioned the importance of **keeping busy**: "I beat the blahs in winter by doing all the things indoors that I don't want to do in the summer: clearing out the cupboards, throwing away things that I haven't looked at for a year, knitting, sewing, writing and e-mailing letters. Sorting out all the pieces of paper of interest that I have saved and filing them away in a binder. Going through all my clothes for charity."

Rick D says keeping busy relieves the blahs *and* his arthritis pain: "I have a list of things to do that require physical activity that can be done indoors or out that allow me to ignore 'bad' weather for my arthritis. I then do some fabric arts for my wife's business that includes rug hooking and that is really good for my old baseball backcatchers' hands. As well, I do some wood crafting and whittling. This is good therapy because it keeps me active and I have things I can see as accomplishments."

Some, like Deanna D, suggest a little **pampering**: "I have a hot bowl of homemade soup with fresh homemade bread, then curl up with my dog and cat and read a good book." Ditto Susan C: "I get a great haircut and manicure to lift my spirits."



Lisa C and family have developed a long-standing blah-beating tradition: "My daughter's birthday is in March. We are so sick of winter by then that we throw her a Jamaican **beach party!** We all wear our brightest beachwear, and enjoy good food and music. It is complete with a limbo contest and prizes in sand pails! She is now 24 and still likes her beach parties the best!"

Finally, some of you, like Patricia B, simply embrace the darker months: "I don't have winter blahs to be beat! I love fall and winter, as they're beautiful to me. I really prefer the colder weather as long as it's not toooooo cold. ... As for early darkness, that's fine too. We have a fireplace, lots of good music, or even videos to watch. Love it!"

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## Season Greetings

