

Avera In Great Health™

AN AVERA eNEWSLETTER ABOUT HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Inside This Issue

Are Your Home and Vehicle Ready for Winter?

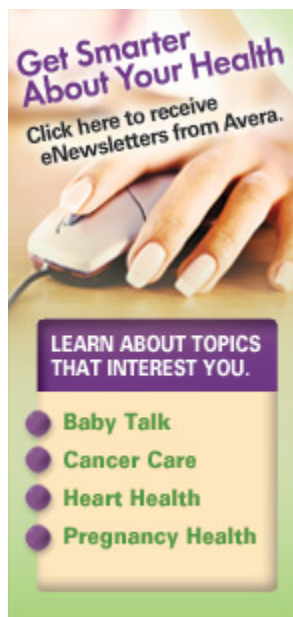
How Cold and Flu Symptoms Differ
Dry Skin? Here's How to Cope.

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To your health,

The Avera staff

Are Your Home and Vehicle Ready for Winter?



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Snowstorms and other severe winter weather can keep you in your house for days, and they can affect your home's heat, power and communications. Be prepared so you can stay healthy during extreme weather conditions.



Make a plan. Know how you'll communicate with your family since you may not be together during an emergency. If you need to travel, make sure someone knows your route, your departure time and destination.

Stock your pantry. In case you can't leave the house, have enough food, water and supplies on hand to last at least three days. Make sure prescriptions are full as well. Consider assembling a [disaster supplies kit](#).

Avoid traveling. Whenever possible, stay at home if bad weather is in the forecast. Cold weather can quickly turn into a dangerous situation if you're stranded while traveling. If you are stranded, do not leave your car. Wait for help. To be safe any time during the winter, keep your gas tank full, perform routine vehicle maintenance and keep an [emergency winter kit](#) in your car.

Stay indoors. Going outdoors in extreme cold can leave you susceptible to [frostbite](#), [hypothermia](#) and other cold-related illnesses. Dress warmly and cover extremities if you must go outdoors.



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Install carbon monoxide detectors in your home. Snow can block your furnace's discharge pipes, which take poisonous carbon monoxide out of your home. Clear snow away from outdoor intake and discharge pipes. Portable heaters, water heaters and stoves can produce carbon monoxide. If your carbon monoxide alarm sounds, seek fresh air immediately by opening a window or going outside.

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[Back to top^](#)

How Cold and Flu Symptoms Differ

You suspect you may have caught the influenza virus during flu season, but your symptoms are still mild enough to be a cold. Differentiating between a [cold and flu](#) can be difficult, but cold symptoms are almost always less severe. Knowing the difference can help you decide when to be in touch with your health care provider.



A high fever (102-104 degrees) and a headache almost always accompany the flu, while colds exhibit neither of these symptoms. The flu may cause nausea, chills and dizziness. Both illnesses may manifest general aches, pains, fatigue, exhaustion and weakness, but they tend to be much more pronounced if you have the flu. Stuffy nose, sneezing and sore throat are all hallmarks of a cold; they only sometimes show up in people suffering from the flu. Chest discomfort and cough are common for both illnesses.

Typically, resting and drinking plenty of fluids for several days helps you get over the flu or a cold. However, pneumonia can develop in people suffering from the flu. Be sure to call your doctor if you have:

- Chronic illness such as heart disease, diabetes or kidney disease
- A temperature above 103 degrees
- Sharp chest pains when you take a deep breath
- Lightheadedness
- Severe shortness of breath
- Painful earache

If at any time you're concerned about your symptoms, don't hesitate to call your health care provider.

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[Back to top^](#)

Dry Skin? Here's How to Cope.

Cold air outside and heated air inside cause low humidity that can make your [skin dry out](#), itch, crack and even bleed. Forced-air furnaces can make skin even drier. The following tips can help keep your skin moisturized during the winter.



Shower less often. Of course hygiene is still important, but reducing the number of showers or baths you take can relieve some of your skin's itchiness. Keep showers and baths short, and use warm (not hot) water.

Change your soap. Mild cleansers and soaps can be gentler on your skin than harsh soaps. Limit your use of soap to on your face, under your arms and between your legs.

Add moisture. Use a thick lotion at least once a day. Apply after showering or bathing to lock in moisture.

Stay hydrated. Drink lots of water during the day.

If your skin is still bothering you, talk to your health care provider. Medication can be prescribed for some chronic skin conditions, such as [eczema](#).

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[Back to top](#)^



In Great Health is one in a series of Avera eNewsletters that gives readers valuable information about health and wellness at Avera facilities. It is not intended to replace personal medical advice, which should be obtained directly from a physician.

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