# Autumn health MOT: a proactive guide to boosting immunity and well-being for colder months



As the evenings draw in and the autumn chill settles, many people begin to notice a creeping sense of both mental and physical fatigue. Rather than simply enduring this seasonal slump, health experts now advocate for a proactive approach — what some are calling an "autumn health MOT" — to prepare the body and mind for the challenges of the colder months ahead.

Dr Elise Dallas, a GP at The London General Practice, explains that this time of year creates a perfect storm for illness due to a combination of factors. Reduced sunlight means lower vitamin D production, a nutrient vital for a robust immune system. Colder, drier air compromises the mucous membranes in the nose and throat, which act as the body’s first line of defence against airborne viruses. Added to this, increased social interactions with the return to schools, offices, and public transport enhance the opportunities for viral transmission.

To counter these risks, experts recommend a series of straightforward but effective steps to bolster health. These include booking routine health checks to review blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, and other long-term conditions, which can help ensure the body is well-prepared for the winter season. Staying hydrated is also crucial as moist mucous membranes are more effective at combating infections. Dr Dallas advises a conscious effort to drink water regularly, suggesting flavouring it with ginger or mint if plain water is unappealing.

Vaccinations remain a cornerstone of winter health strategies. Dr Michael Zemenides, co-founder of the A-Z General Practice at The Wellington Hospital, urges that flu and COVID-19 vaccinations be kept up to date as they significantly reduce the risk of severe illness and hospitalisation. He notes that in many cases, both vaccines can be administered simultaneously to save time and maximise protection.

Sleep quality is another pillar of resilience during autumn and winter. The longer hours of darkness can disrupt circadian rhythms, leading to poor or excessive sleep, which in turn impacts emotional balance and stress management. Maintaining a consistent sleep routine and aiming for seven to nine hours of quality rest, preferably before midnight, is recommended.

Stress management is equally important. The shorter days and increased seasonal pressures can intensify feelings of anxiety and low mood. Dr Dallas highlights how chronic stress activates the body’s fight-or-flight response, which can undermine immune function. She suggests dedicating even a few minutes daily to mindfulness or relaxation techniques, citing apps such as Calm as useful tools for this purpose.

Since vitamin D levels tend to fall between October and March, supplementation with about 10 micrograms (400 IU) daily is advised, alongside consumption of vitamin D-rich foods like oily fish, eggs, and fortified products. Supporting this, recent research published in *Advanced Science* found that regular exercise during autumn and winter not only helps maintain vitamin D levels but boosts the active forms crucial for bone, organ, and immune health. A 10-week study involving overweight and obese participants showed a significantly smaller decline in vitamin D levels among those who exercised regularly.

Physical activity, particularly outdoors, also contributes to stress relief, improved mood, and better sleep. Although colder temperatures and shorter days can reduce the temptation to venture outside, even short daily walks in daylight can provide mental and physical benefits.

On the nutritional front, experts recommend favouring immune-supportive, seasonal foods to optimise the body’s defences. Nutrient-dense vegetables such as squash, sweet potatoes, leafy greens, and root vegetables provide vital antioxidants and vitamins like C and beta-carotene. Foods with natural antiviral and antibacterial properties, including garlic and onions, are beneficial, as are mushrooms rich in beta-glucans, which enhance immune response. Maintaining a healthy gut through probiotic-rich foods such as yogurt and fermented vegetables, along with fibre-rich whole grains, fruits, and vegetables, also supports immunity.

Guidelines from institutions like the CDC underscore the importance of regular moderate-intensity aerobic exercise—at least 150 minutes weekly—to boost immune function, while hydration recommendations from the National Academies of Sciences suggest daily fluid intakes of about 3.7 liters for men and 2.7 liters for women. These integrated approaches to diet, exercise, hydration, stress management, and preventive care form a comprehensive autumn health MOT to help individuals weather the season’s ailments and enhance overall well-being.

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* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/winter-health-mot-doctor-illness-b2844412.html), [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/winter-health-mot-doctor-illness-b2844412.html), [[3]](https://www.inkl.com/news/how-to-conduct-an-autumn-health-mot)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/winter-health-mot-doctor-illness-b2844412.html), [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/winter-health-mot-doctor-illness-b2844412.html), [[3]](https://www.inkl.com/news/how-to-conduct-an-autumn-health-mot)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/winter-health-mot-doctor-illness-b2844412.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/winter-health-mot-doctor-illness-b2844412.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/winter-health-mot-doctor-illness-b2844412.html), [[4]](https://www.womanandhome.com/health-wellbeing/health-wellbeing-news/exercise-boosts-vitamin-d-in-winter/)
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* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/winter-health-mot-doctor-illness-b2844412.html), [[5]](https://naturessupplements.co.uk/blogs/blog/boost-your-immune-system-this-autumn-tips-and-tricks-for-staying-healthy), [[6]](https://www.fccmg.com/blog/autumn-health-guide--staying-well-as-seasons-change), [[7]](https://www.snhhealth.org/about-us/about-snhh/news-and-articles/boosting-your-immune-system-fall-primary-care-guide-downtown-medical-associates)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/winter-health-mot-doctor-illness-b2844412.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/winter-health-mot-doctor-illness-b2844412.html> - As autumn sets in, many experience mental and physical fatigue. Experts recommend a proactive 'autumn health MOT' to boost health during colder months. Dr. Elise Dallas explains that reduced sunlight leads to lower vitamin D levels, essential for immune function. Additionally, colder, drier air affects mucous membranes, reducing their ability to combat airborne viruses. Increased exposure to new environments, such as schools and offices, also heightens the risk of illness. To stay healthy, consider booking routine health checks, staying hydrated, keeping up with vaccinations, prioritising sleep, managing stress, increasing vitamin D intake, staying active outdoors, and consuming immune-boosting foods.
3. <https://www.inkl.com/news/how-to-conduct-an-autumn-health-mot> - As autumn approaches, experts advise a comprehensive 'autumn health MOT' to maintain well-being during colder months. Dr. Elise Dallas highlights that reduced sunlight leads to lower vitamin D levels, essential for immune function. Additionally, colder, drier air affects mucous membranes, reducing their ability to combat airborne viruses. Increased exposure to new environments, such as schools and offices, also heightens the risk of illness. To stay healthy, consider booking routine health checks, staying hydrated, keeping up with vaccinations, prioritising sleep, managing stress, increasing vitamin D intake, staying active outdoors, and consuming immune-boosting foods.
4. <https://www.womanandhome.com/health-wellbeing/health-wellbeing-news/exercise-boosts-vitamin-d-in-winter/> - A recent study published in *Advanced Science* found that regular exercise helps maintain vitamin D levels during autumn and winter, when sunlight exposure is limited. Researchers from the universities of Bath, Cambridge, and Birmingham conducted a 10-week study involving 50 overweight and obese participants. The exercise group experienced only a 15% drop in vitamin D levels compared to a 25% drop in the non-exercising group. The regimen included treadmill workouts, static bike rides, and high-intensity interval training. The study suggests that exercise boosts active forms of vitamin D, essential for bone, immune, and organ health.
5. <https://naturessupplements.co.uk/blogs/blog/boost-your-immune-system-this-autumn-tips-and-tricks-for-staying-healthy> - Autumn brings an abundance of nutrient-dense foods perfect for supporting immunity. Focus on fruits and vegetables rich in vitamins and antioxidants, such as squash, sweet potatoes, carrots, apples, and berries, which contain vitamin C and beta-carotene. Garlic and onions have natural antiviral and antibacterial properties. Mushrooms are high in immune-boosting beta-glucans. Regular physical activity, like walking, cycling, or yoga, improves circulation and boosts immune function. A healthy gut is crucial for a strong immune system; include probiotic-rich foods like yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, and kimchi, and fibre-rich foods like whole grains, fruits, and vegetables.
6. <https://www.fccmg.com/blog/autumn-health-guide--staying-well-as-seasons-change> - As the fall cold, flu, and COVID season approaches, Family Care Centers Medical Group offers essential tips to stay healthy during cooler months. Boost your immune system by increasing intake of vitamin C-rich foods like citrus fruits, bell peppers, and leafy greens. Maintain adequate vitamin D levels through safe sun exposure or supplements, as advised by your healthcare provider. Regular exercise and sufficient sleep are vital for immune function, with the CDC recommending at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity weekly for adults. Proper hydration remains essential; the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine advises an adequate daily fluid intake of about 15.5 cups (3.7 liters) for men and 11.5 cups (2.7 liters) for women.
7. <https://www.snhhealth.org/about-us/about-snhh/news-and-articles/boosting-your-immune-system-fall-primary-care-guide-downtown-medical-associates> - Getting a head start on immune support in August or early September is key. It allows your body time to build up its resilience before cold and flu viruses become more widespread. Top strategies for a stronger immune system this fall include fueling your body with nutrient-rich foods, prioritising quality sleep, staying hydrated, and embracing regular physical activity. A balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, whole grains, and healthy fats supports immune health. Aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep per night, establish a consistent sleep schedule, and engage in moderate exercise to improve immune function.