

Peter Harrison Centre

for Disability Sport

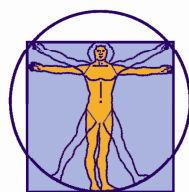
“Eat Smart” for the New Year

By Jeanette Crosland MSc RD SENr

Cold winter days, nice hot comfort foods to make us feel better and to top it off – we just enjoyed Christmas ! A time of year when traditionally we eat and drink a little more than we need. So maybe now is a time to spring clean our eating habits and think about eating smart. Here are ten tips for eating smarter this winter. The tips apply to everyone – but there are a few extra pointers for wheelchair users.

1. Think about your actual needs – especially in terms of energy. How active are you? – How much training are you doing? If you are a wheelchair user your energy requirements are probably a little lower than your non wheelchair user friends/relatives etc. Eat to your needs!
2. Christmas has been and gone – still got boxes of chocolates or snacks lying around – give them a way!
3. High fat foods are high in calories as well as being potentially harmful to our arteries. Aim to choose some lower fat alternatives by looking at cooking methods, lower fat milk, yogurts etc
4. As always there are lots of bugs about in winter and this year we have the extra flu warnings. Having given a warning about eating too much remember that if you are active and training hard it is important to take enough calories on board to cope with that training. That means including enough carbs and fat to cover your needs.
5. Choose healthier fats. The fat that is found in animal based foods is usually high in saturated fat and this is the kind of fat that will clog up arteries. Instead choose mono unsaturated fat – found in olive oil and rapeseed oil, or poly unsaturated fat found in sunflower seed and soya oils.
6. A good intake of antioxidants can help to fight infections that can be an issue for wheelchair users so plenty of fruit and vegetables are a good idea. Hot soup is a great winter warmer -make your own low fat soups with lots of winter vegetables – a good way to increase your vitamin and mineral intake too.
7. Include some root vegetables, winter greens, berries and citrus fruit in season to boost your levels of vitamin C and maybe a few nuts as a snack provides zinc and vitamin E.

8. With darker nights there is a great opportunity to keep warm by cooking – try some new recipes – or improve your skills. Look for recipes that can be made quickly and stored in the freezer. Come the summer months you'll be able to build up a “store cupboard” in your freezer to save time and stop you buying ‘take aways’ when there is a lot to do and time is tight.
9. In winter our intake of vitamin D tends to fall as the major source is the action of sunlight on our skin. Even if we are outside training in winter – chances are that skin will be well covered up. Vitamin D is only found naturally in a few foods (oily fish, eggs, fatty meat) so we tend to rely on topping up with fortified foods. Margarine and breakfast cereals are the major sources of added dietary vitamin D , so including some in the diet is a good idea.
10. And finally ... don't forget to keep drinking. Fluid matters even in winter. Ideally you should know how much fluid you need to cope with training plus how much you need to cope on a daily basis. Intake might be lower than in summer but fluid is important to avoid urinary tract infections. Some tea and coffee is fine but if you want a warm drink that's caffeine free try squash made up with hot water or herbal or fruit teas.



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