

## How to Fight the Winter Snooze



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Everything seems to slow down in the winter—the rivers freeze, the plants and trees take a seasonal nap and even taxis seem to take forever to pick us up. Because of the cold, we humans seem to be puttering around at a slower pace.

Winter is here

Winter fatigue is very common in northern countries. We are more conscious of it in January because after the hoopla of the holidays, we know that we have a long haul until we are warm and snow-free by April (or even May). Most of us have heard of seasonal affective disorder (SAD) and know that it can be treated with sunlight and vitamin D, but what about general winter fatigue?

A good adaptogen and restorative

In herbal medicine an adaptogen is defined as an herb that helps the body through a time of stress and which has a balancing effect on body function. A restorative is defined as an herb that brings a person back to normal vigor. Below are your best bets for adaptogenic and restorative herbs.

Green tea

Green tea is a mild stimulant. It has been shown to improve cognitive performance, which is the mental process of knowing, thinking, learning and judging. Improving cognitive performance helps us shake off the mental dullness that comes with fatigue. A study was conducted on eight male patients, where each consumed four different hot beverages, one of which was green tea. After drinking the beverages the men completed nine tests of mental function. The researchers observed that the men who had taken green tea had significantly faster reaction times and their ability to successfully complete the mental tests increased.

Siberian ginseng (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*)

Studies have shown that Siberian ginseng has anti-fatigue and anti-stress effects. A study on middle-aged people found that Siberian ginseng improves cognitive performance.

Korean ginseng (*Panax ginseng*)

Korean ginseng has been used in Asia for several thousand years as an adaptogen and a restorative agent. Korean ginseng has been used to treat chronic fatigue, nervous disorders, forgetfulness, confusion and decreased libido. Animal studies have shown that Korean ginseng has tonic effects on physically and/or mentally fatigued subjects. Studies have also shown that Korean ginseng has an effect on the heart, the central nervous system, the hormonal system (endocrine), metabolism and the immune system.

Cola nut

Cola nut has been shown to be effective for short-term relief of mental and physical fatigue. Cola nut has also been shown to be effective in depressive states, especially those associated with general muscle weakness, and for melancholy and exhaustion.

More things to try...

These are but the tip of the iceberg in helping you shake off winter grogginess. Contrast showers (alternating hot and cold water—always end on cold) are great for invigorating your body, getting your blood moving and waking you up. You should also consider exercising and winter sports.