

GUMC HEALTH AWARENESS INITIATIVE JANUARY 2025

January is Family Lifestyle Month. This month's health awareness initiative will also focus on Winter Storm Safety.

Do you yearn for a healthier lifestyle?

Many of us want to make changes in our daily lives to help improve our health. But how do we even start? And how do we make those habits stick? It may help to have a few strategies, or life hacks, that you can use to help you make progress towards your goals. Below are a few suggestions to try:

- **Rally around your reasons.** Knowing the why behind your goal may be a powerful motivator. Will your new habits help you to feel better, be healthier or do something meaningful to you? You know your reasons best.
- **Ask for support.** Making changes may be easier when friends and family get behind your goals. For instance, you might ask them to exercise with you or not smoke around you. Your doctor might be a good resource too.
- **Give yourself a gift.** Rewards may help keep you working toward important milestones. Just remember to keep them healthy too. How about a new book or a special coffee blend?
- **Take one small step.** Most goals are easier when you break them down into smaller steps. Let's say you want to lower your blood pressure. Start with one change. For instance, this week, you might fill your prescription. Next week, maybe you can try out a new heart-healthy recipe. Build on each success.
- **Be kind to yourself.** Sooner or later, you might have a setback. If this happens, tell yourself it isn't the end. Think about how you can avoid the setback next time. Then get right back at it.
- **Don't get stuck in a rut.** Variety keeps things interesting. And interesting means you may be more likely to keep a good thing going. No matter how good they are for you, you'll get bored if you do the same exercise or eat the same foods over and over again.
- **Use positive self-talk to keep you going.** Don't let doubt overshadow your accomplishments. Tell yourself things like, "Look how far I've come. I've got this!"

Winter Storm Safety - During extremely cold weather or winter storms, staying warm and safe can be a challenge. This is just a reminder of the dangers of winter weather and how to prepare to endure it. Winter storms can bring extreme cold, freezing rain, sleet, heavy snowfall, ice, and high winds. These storms can cause transportation, heat, power, and communication disruptions. They also can close schools, stores, and workplaces. Winters are getting warmer and shorter because of climate change. But, because a warmer atmosphere holds more moisture, heavier snowfalls are more likely to occur. We can take action to prepare now to protect yourself, your loved ones, and your home.

Take immediate precautions if you hear these words on the news: **Winter Storm WARNING:** Life-threatening, severe winter conditions have begun or will begin within 24 hours; **Wind Chill Temperature:** How cold people and animals feel when outside. As wind increases, heat is carried away from your body at a faster rate, driving down your body temperature and making you feel much colder. The wind chill temperature is not the actual temperature but rather how wind and cold feel on exposed skin; **Winter Storm Outlook:** Winter storm conditions possible in the next two to five days. Stay tuned to local media for updates; **Winter Storm Watch:** Winter storm conditions possible within the next 36 to 48 hours. Review your winter storm plans and stay informed about weather conditions; and, **Winter Weather Advisory:** Winter weather conditions expected to cause significant inconveniences and may be hazardous but not life-threatening if you are cautious.

Plan Ahead Now Before an Emergency Happens. During extremely cold weather, staying warm and safe can be a challenge. Learn how to prepare for winter storms, prevent cold temperature-related health problems, and protect yourself, your family, and your pets during all stages of a winter storm. Learn how to make a plan before an emergency happens. Plan to Stay Warm

Stay warm indoors to prevent frostbite and hypothermia. Before the winter season begins, make sure you can heat your home safely. Prepare your home to keep out the cold with insulation, caulking, and weather stripping. Consider using an indoor thermometer or thermostat to monitor the temperature inside. Plan to check on loved ones and neighbors to make sure they are staying warm. This is especially important for older adults and babies. Drink plenty of warm fluids but avoid caffeine and alcohol. Avoid travel if you can. If you must go outside, plan to dress properly. Keep your nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers, and toes covered in warm, dry clothing. These areas are the first to be at risk for frostbite. Wear layers of loose clothing, a coat, hat, mittens, and water-resistant boots. Use a scarf to cover your face and mouth. Know where you will go if your home becomes too cold. You could go to a relative's or friend's house, a public library, or a warming center.

Gather Emergency Supplies. Gather food, water, and medicine before a winter storm. Stores might be closed, and it may be unsafe to travel. Organize supplies into a Go-Kit and a Stay-at-Home Kit. Go-Kit: at least three days of supplies you can carry with you if you need to go somewhere else to stay warm. Include critical backup batteries and chargers for your devices (cell phone, CPAP, wheelchair, etc.) Stay-at-Home Kit: at least two weeks of supplies. Ensure you have enough warm clothing, such as hats, mittens, and blankets, for everyone in your household. You may lose access to drinking water. Set aside at least one gallon of drinking water per person per day. Consider having emergency supplies in your vehicle, such as a blanket, warm clothing, a first aid kit, and boots. Have a 1-month supply of needed medications and medical supplies. Consider keeping a list of your medications and dosages on a small card to carry with you. Keep personal, financial, and medical records safe and easy to access (hard copies or securely backed up). Have a snow shovel and ice-melting products to keep your walkways safe.

Learn Emergency Skills. Learn first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Emergency services may be delayed. Learn how to spot and treat frostbite and hypothermia. Install and test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors with battery back-ups. Be ready to live without power, gas, and water. Learn how to keep pipes from freezing.

Plan to Stay Connected. Sign up for free emergency alerts from your local government. Plan to monitor local weather and news. Have a backup battery or a way to charge your cell phone. Have a battery-powered radio to use during a power outage. Understand the alerts you may receive: A WATCH means Be Prepared! A WARNING means Take Action! Create a support team to help everyone stay safe in a disaster. Plan how you can help each other.

Bring your pets indoors. If you have pets, bring them indoors. If you cannot bring them inside, provide adequate shelter to keep them warm and make sure they have access to unfrozen water.

Get your car ready. Have maintenance service on your vehicle as often as the manufacturer recommends. In addition, every fall, do the following: Have the radiator system serviced or check the antifreeze level yourself with an antifreeze tester. Add antifreeze as needed. Replace windshield-wiper fluid with a wintertime mixture. Make sure the tires on your car have adequate tread and air pressure. Replace any worn tires and fill low tires with air to the proper pressure recommended for your car (typically between 30-35 psi). Keep the gas tank near full to help avoid ice in the tank and fuel lines. Keep your car in good working order. Be sure to check the following: heater, defroster, brakes, brake fluid, ignition, emergency flashers, exhaust, oil, and battery.

[Excerpts taken from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention]

DISCLAIMER: The information contained in this document is not intended to diagnose, treat, or to be misrepresented as a cure for a healthy lifestyle or winter storm safety. It is "intended to, and must be used for informational purposes only," and readers should "take independent medical advice from a medical professional."