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5 Ways to Stay Pain-Free This Winter

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Brrr! When the winter wind howls, fibromyalgia symptoms can worsen. Stay warm with these cold-weather strategies.



Do your fibromyalgia symptoms flare in the winter? Try dressing in warm yet loose-fitting clothes to stay toasty.

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FAST FACTS

- People with **fibromyalgia** respond differently to cold weather. Some find the cold weather comforting, while others say it makes their symptoms worse.
- Some ways to **stay warm this winter** include taking a warm or hot bath, dressing in layers, and limiting alcohol.

Winter can be a difficult time for many people because of the cold weather, minimal sunlight, and shorter days. But what's surprising, says **Anthony P. Geraci, MD**, vice-chairman of the department of neurology and rehabilitation medicine at Lutheran Medical Center in New York, is that weather that's a bit on the cold side can actually be somewhat comforting for people with fibromyalgia.

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"Most will say that the warm and humid months are bad for their pain," Dr. Geraci explains. "Cold weather is less likely to make one sweat and can have beneficial effects on the pain centers in the brain."

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However, if you have pain and **other fibromyalgia symptoms**, you might feel negative effects in areas with extreme cold in the winter or when the temperature fluctuates a great deal. "A cold breeze blowing across an already-energy-deficient muscle will throw it into shortening, and shortened muscles are the primary and key cause of pain," says **Jacob Teitelbaum, MD**, director of The Annapolis Center for Effective Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/Fibromyalgia Therapies.

Fighting Off the Fibromyalgia Winter Blues

When your **fibromyalgia symptoms** flare in bone-chilling temperatures, try these strategies to warm up and relieve the pain:

1. Dip into a nightly bath. Studies have shown that taking warm or hot baths can have a therapeutic effect for fibromyalgia pain. If you take a soothing bath each night during the winter, it will have the secondary effect of warming your bones and taking away any chill that's contributing to fibromyalgia pain and symptoms.

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2. Dress appropriately for the weather. Tight clothing can often be a bother for people with