

IWG – Member Support Materials

Getting ready for winter

It may sound obvious but you do need to think about the impact that the winter might have on you, this may be from a practicalities, health or general well being point of view. This is particularly the case if you are used to living in a country where the days are relatively long throughout the year.

The Polish winter can be very long and grey and the days very short. It is not unusual for it to be dark by 15.30 in the afternoon. The short days, lack of sunshine and the abundance of greyness can make it a bit more difficult to get motivated to leave the house, in some circumstances this can have an adverse effect on your physical and mental wellbeing.

We have put together a few tips to help you deal with the winters here. If you have other good ideas that are not mentioned please let us know so we can keep updating our information.

Going outside / dealing with the cold

The Swedes have a saying that translates as *“there is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothes”*. Yes, the winter can get really cold here but if you are well equipped there is no reason why you can't be out and about enjoying the city.

- Make sure you invest in a good, warm winter coat it can make a massive difference if you can get one that is wind / water proof, even better.
- Warm / waterproof boots with a good grip on the sole are also recommended. On days when the temperatures are dipping to around -20 degrees Celsius you will be grateful for them. While the councils are quite good at clearing snow from the pavements quickly it can get quite slushy and slippery so you do need to have some grip on the boots.
- A good hat is a must.
- Layering your clothes is important. While the temperatures may be low outside, public transport, shops, cafes etc will have the heating turned up so make sure you can adapt to the change of temperature. Top tip: Thermal underwear or long silk underwear can be really effective as a way of layering clothing.

Keeping routine

Having a routine will help you cope with the short days, even if this routine is just meeting people for coffee.

A good recommendation is that you make sure you have some kind of social engagement scheduled for a Monday morning or maybe a regular gym class, this helps you to get out of the apartment / house and start the week in a positive frame of mind. The IWG Monday morning coffee meetings are an ideal opportunity!

Why not use the poor weather as a great excuse to check out the many great museums in Warsaw (including Polin – the European Museum of the year 2016)

Exercise

The benefits of exercise (at any time of the year) are well documented, but maybe the feel good feeling that you get post exercise is even more important during the winter months.

If you already have a regular exercise routine it is important to maintain it. If you don't already have one maybe it is time to think about joining the gym, taking up an online pilates course or even joining the IWG walking group!

Socialising

You might feel like it is too cold or too wet to go out so you want to stop inside. BUT do not underestimate the positive pick me up effect that meeting up with friends can have, even if it just for a chat and a coffee.

It is important to maintain your social relationships and to talk to people. Don't hide away as you run the risk of becoming demotivated. If you are feeling the winter blues, tell someone. There are lots of people in the IWG that have been new to Polish winters, they will understand what you are going through and may be able to offer some tried and tested tips for coping.

Maybe the winter is the perfect time to joining a new group. Have a look through the IWG small groups brochure and see if something new appeals to you. Joining a group will help with socialising and routine and you might make some new friends!

Vitamin D

The short days can have quite an impact on your vitamin D intake so it might be that

you need to start taking Vitamin D supplements. Vitamin D supplements are available from the Apteka shops but you should seek medical opinion before taking any.

Seeing the light!

So the daylight might be in short supply outside but all the more reason to brighten / cosy up your house / apartment with lamps, lights and candles.

One way of doing this is to adopt the Scandinavian approach to winter and embrace the “Hygge” culture. This is all about being cosy, spending time with friends and family and enjoying the winter. Here are a couple of articles that explain it far better than we could.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-34345791>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/wellbeing/mood-and-mind/Danish-cosy-hygge-lifestyle-cosiness-winter-warmth-Nordic-Danes-Scandi-home-interiors/>

Here are a couple of examples:



If winter is effecting you particularly badly, you might want to consider a light therapy lamp. While there are many light therapy lamps available, not all provide the same type or intensity of light. Some lamps provide ultraviolet rays, the same rays the sun does. Others limit UV rays, but generate narrow-band light with short wavelengths to help with blue-light therapy. Due to the range available it is important that you research what type would be best for you.

Travelling

If you have the opportunity to travel during the winter, do it. Whether it is heading home to see friends and family, exploring the more southern countries of Europe or even just heading to the mountains for some skiing. A break away can make all the difference.

It is not our intention to imply that the winter is going to be all about doom and gloom – far from it there are lots of positive things about Warsaw that only happen during the winter months but you need to get out and about to see them!!

For example :

Warsaw Christmas decorations



Get your warm winter coat on and head down to Nowy Swiat and the Old town to take in the Christmas lights and decorations. The Christmas light switch on outside the palace is hugely popular.

The Garden of light at Wilanow Palace



Head out to Wilanow palace on a weekend afternoon and you will be able to see the beautiful garden of light and the very impressive ‘mappings’ – moving stories projected onto the front of the palace. For more information see [Wilanow Palace](#)

Ice skating

Get your skates on and head to the ice rinks at the National Stadium, the Palace of Culture or the Old town square

Winter Tea!



Just delicious and a great way to feel nice and cosy when the temperatures have dropped.

There can be some truly beautiful sunny days during the winter – even when the temperature is -20c! When they come along – get out and enjoy them. The parks and forests are gorgeous in the snow!

Hopefully some of these ideas will help you through the Polish winter time but if you find none of these things are working for you it is worthwhile speaking to your Doctor as you may benefit from taking a course of mild anti-depressants.

Further reading

Here are some interesting articles that go into more depth about the ‘winter blues’ and how to cope with them.

<http://www.wikihow.com/Fight-Winter-Blues>

http://www.sparkpeople.com/resource/wellness_articles.asp?id=341

[http://www.pickthebrain.com/blog/5-positive-coping-methods-to-beat-the-winter-blues/](http://www.pickthebrain.com/blog/5-positive- coping-methods-to-beat-the-winter-blues/)

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/dealing-with-winter-blues-sad.aspx>

<http://www.ulifeline.org/articles/380-tips-for-dealing-with-the-winter-blues>

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/seasonal-affective-disorder/basics/definition/con-20021047>

<http://www.webmd.com/mental-health/tc/seasonal-affective-disorder-sad-topic-overview>