

Tips for a Happy, Healthy Holiday Season

Stress Does Happen

During the holidays, the demands on both time and finances are high. Create a budget for both to help you manage. Keep a calendar of events and deadlines (shopping, holiday cards, shipping etc).

Being organized helps you make decisions and feel more in control. It's OK not to accept every holiday invitation. Choose the things that mean the most to you.

Set a budget and decide how much you will spend on gifts, charitable giving, parties, etc. Be creative: can you make some homemade gifts?

Consider making a donation to a favorite cause as a gift in honor of someone.



Unplug and give yourself time away from computers, cell phones and other devices. Being constantly connected can lead to overload. Give yourself time to relax and clear the clutter in your mind.

Travelling? Expect the unexpected. If driving, pack healthy snacks and water. Make sure your car has blankets, emergency supplies, etc. Plan break times into your trip, so you don't get drowsy on the road.

Airlines notoriously experience delays during the busy holiday season. Keep this in perspective. If possible, consider shipping gifts ahead of time. Keep some healthy snacks with you, along with good music, reading or games to keep yourself and family members occupied.

For people who have lost a loved one, the holidays can be difficult. Pare down. Sometimes you may want to do less decorating and celebrating. Surrounding yourself with a few cherished holiday decorations may feel more comfortable than going all out. You might want to start a new tradition that honors your loved one.

If you don't feel like attending parties, you may find that community events such as concerts, tree lightings, or religious ceremonies help ease loneliness.

Exercise Should Happen

Physical activity is often the first thing to go during the busy holiday season. However, being physically active is even more important at this time of year. Exercise can help manage stress and elevate your mood. It also burns calories and helps boost your metabolism-important with all the opportunities to indulge in extra calories!

When you can, stick to your regular exercise routine. When you can't, look for ways to do shorter bursts of activity throughout the day that add up to 30 minutes.

Take a short walk outside (being outdoors in natural light benefits mood), take a lap around the mall before you start shopping, park at the far end of the lot, take stairs instead of using the elevator, make some of your holiday get-togethers active (ice skating, hiking, bowling, neighborhood decoration tours). In short, whenever you have the chance to move, do it!



Healthy Eating Can Happen



Have a strategy for enjoying treats. For example, if it is something that you can have at any time of the year (like a chocolate chip cookie), bypass it. If it is a special holiday treat, enjoy it in moderation.

If it is a holiday treat that you don't particularly like or wouldn't normally eat, don't eat it (despite "pressure" to do so). Keeping baking to a minimum, just one or two traditional things you enjoy, may remove some temptation to overeat.

When preparing your own food and meals, look for healthy substitutions for ingredients (e.g., low fat or non-fat Greek yogurt instead of sour cream). Add a colorful fruit or vegetable side dish instead of a starchy high calorie choice.

Maintain a regular eating schedule; don't starve during the day then go overboard at a party. At a buffet table, look at all the choices before filling your plate. Be selective with the calorie dense foods, and fill in your plate with veggies, fruits and grains. Don't make food the primary focus of a party-move away from the buffet table and mingle with guests.



Alcohol has lots of empty calories. If you drink, do so in moderation. Wine has fewer calories than mixed drinks or cocktails.

Try alternating water in between drinks of alcohol. Don't forget a designated driver or alternate means home if you've had too much to drink.

The holidays aren't the time to start a diet or try to lose weight. Do your best to maintain healthy eating habits most of the time. When you do over eat, eat a little lighter the next day. One big meal won't make you gain weight. However, lots of little indulgences over time can result in holiday weight gain.

Simplicity and Gratitude Will Happen

Often, simple is better. Take time to savor the sights and sounds of the holidays. Scaling back gives you time to appreciate the beauty of the time of year.

Focus on being grateful for all that you have, keep a gratitude journal, express your appreciation to family, friends or co-workers.

Focusing on gratitude can lead to more happiness and satisfaction. A good way to start the New Year.





This holiday season give the gift of health to yourself, as well as your friends and family, by making shopping and the exchanging of gifts an exercise in health and fitness.

Holiday shopping is a great way to include exercise in your day, especially when holiday activities keep you from getting to the gym. When heading out to the mall, look for the farthest parking spot in the parking lot. Walking those extra steps is an easy way to make a difference.

When you get to the shopping center, start with a brisk walk through the mall or up and down the aisles of the store. It is a great way to clear your head and gather your thoughts before the spending begins.

When you arrive home, make a few trips to unload the car instead of trying to bring in all your packages in one trip. Once you've brought in all your packages, relax with a cup of herbal tea or low fat chocolate milk for a low calorie beverage. You can enjoy a couple of holiday treats, too. Just remember that portion control is the key to eating healthy.

Here are some gift ideas to put on your wish list or to give to others this holiday season:

- A journal for recording your thoughts, activities or goals
- A subscription for a health-related magazine. Cooking Light is my favorite
- A recipe organizer to keep track of your favorite recipes
- A membership to a gym or gift certificate for a yoga class
- A gift basket of healthy foods (olive oil, almonds, flax seed, fruit, flavored vinegars, sun-dried tomatoes, whole wheat pasta, etc.)
- Hand weights or an exercise ball and instructional book or DVD
- Cooking items such as a culinary knife, nonstick skillet, a set of cutting boards.



Chipotle Kale Chips

Recipe by myrecipes.com

Ingredients

- 1 cup chopped kale leaves (stemmed)
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon chipotle chili powder



Directions

Preheat oven to 425°. Toss kale with olive oil, kosher salt, and chipotle chili powder. Arrange kale on a baking sheet. Bake 8 minutes.

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