

Healthy
for the
Holidays



Keep Fit For Holidays

The busy holiday season can make it easy to make excuses to avoid exercise. This can be a dangerous habit that will affect the hard work you put in all year. The good news is that there are many ways to stick to a workout regimen, even during the holidays.

Of course, holidays are filled with large portions of food — including desserts that you might only see once a year. Do your best to not overindulge, as this may lower your energy, lessening your desire for physical activity.

With some effort, you can find the perfect balance between exercise and celebrating during this time of the year.

EXERCISE ON THE GO

If you are planning to travel over the holidays, be sure to research the area in which you will be staying. Check maps for walking trails or parks near the location. Better yet, if you're staying with family, ask them about their favorite nearby places to go burn a few calories.

They might even have exercise equipment in their home you can use to avoid exposure to cold temperatures. When making plans for your visit, incorporate light activities that promote exercise. For instance, see about taking a walk around the neighborhood to see the sights. Even walking at a light pace will benefit your cardiovascular system.

If you plan to stay in a hotel, find one that offers a free gym during your stay. The fitness equipment is likely top notch and can help you feel like you are at your facility back home.

PREPARING A BACKUP PLAN

Even the best schedules can be disrupted by unforeseen events. If your morning walk or gym visit gets derailed, you can still perform an effective workout without any equipment.

For these scenarios, you can create a quick workout routine including jump-



ing jacks, squats, pushups or other favorite exercises. Try to include some that don't require a lot of room as you might find yourself in a tight space.

EXTRA ACTIVITY THROUGHOUT THE DAY

The holidays can be extremely busy,

so you might not know exactly when you'll squeeze in a workout. Take advantage of any opportunity that invites physical activity.

Heavy snow might ruin your plans for getting outdoors, but you can get a great workout by shoveling the driveway. To burn extra calories and score

brownie points with neighbors, offer to shovel theirs, too.

Another idea is to consider making extra laps at the mall while shopping for gifts.

Get creative with your physical activity this holiday season. Your body will thank you.

Healthy Meal Traditions

Your family likely has several dishes reserved for special occasions. Chances are some of these are desserts or unhealthy dips that have been traditions for decades.

It's easy to overindulge on the delicious foods you might eat only during the holiday season. This year, introduce your family to new dishes that promote positive health benefits.

The American Heart Association offers many great ideas on how to make new traditions healthy.

SUBSTITUTE WHILE BAKING

Most baking recipes call for heaps of butter, sugar and milk. While these ingredients might do their part in creating mouth-watering desserts, they also can impact a waistline. When reviewing your favorite recipe, try to alter it with comparable substitutes.

The AHA defines saturated fat as fat molecules that have no double bonds between carbon molecules because they are saturated with hydrogen molecules. Too much saturated fat can raise the cholesterol in your blood, which increases your risk of heart disease.

The butter used in your favorite baking dish is a usual culprit, carrying high levels of saturated fats. Instead, you can use cinnamon-flavored, no-sugar-added applesauce for substance and vanilla or peppermint to add flavor.

Helpful substitutions for other ingredients:

- Use a low-calorie sugar

substitute when sugar is called for in a recipe;

- Rather than using whole or heavy cream, use low-fat or skim milk; and

- Avoid using candies or chocolate chips in your recipes. You can still have a tasty treat with dried fruit or nuts to enhance your dish.

HEALTHY SIDES

How many times are you asked to “bring a side” when attending a holiday party? Guests are usually asked to bring a small appetizer while the host prepares the main entree. You've probably noticed these sides are often dips loaded with cheese, potatoes dressed to the max and some foods that should never be fried dropped into the fryer. (We're looking at you, deep-fried Twinkie.)

This year, when you're asked to bring a side, prepare a dish that will leave guests amazed by the flavor and impressed when they find out it is good for them. You might turn one of your friends or family on to a healthier diet.

Salads can please both the appetite and eyes. Create an attractive salad by featuring several different-colored vegetables and a light-balsamic vinaigrette dressing to impress at the table. Add plenty of fresh vegetables and even fruits.



Controlling Portions

With the holiday season around the corner, Americans will likely be tempted to overeat at gatherings. Potlucks, family get-togethers and work parties all tend to encourage second helpings of unhealthy foods. Be sure to avoid breaking your diet while enjoying this special time with your family.

Holiday traditions often include indulging in high-calorie recipes. Having control of your intake allows you to enjoy these delicious foods while keeping your calories in check. If you know you will be attending a get-together, it is a good idea to have a light breakfast or lunch so you can partake in these delicacies guilt-free.

KNOW YOUR INTAKE

You likely have a smartphone or other device that can make calorie counting simple. It is an easy task to find a mobile application that allows you to record the number of calories you have ingested and even burned.

It is important to log your intake and output every day to ensure accurate results. This is a fun way to track eating habits and lessen the chances of eating foods that don't clearly spell out their nutrition facts.

Get your family involved with the same program you're using to track calories. Friendly competition makes it easier to stick to your set number of calories. If everyone is on board, there might be fewer unhealthy foods on the table this holiday.

EATING OUT

During the holidays, you will likely find yourself at a restaurant enjoying the company of family and friends. This is a crucial time for portion control. These foods can be rich in calories and other unhealthy components that can cause you to backtrack on your diet.

Avoiding all-you-can-eat buffets is a no-brainer, but if your family insists on gathering there, you can still do it



healthily. Most buffets have impressive salad and fruit bars that sometimes go overlooked due to the full dessert bar. Fill your plate with healthy choices,

such as green vegetables and lean proteins.

Eating at a traditional sit-down restaurant can make it easier to make

healthy decisions. If the menu doesn't list the nutritional information, inquire with the staff about low-calorie options.

Celebrating Responsibly

The holidays present opportunities for gatherings amongst family and friends, many of which might include alcohol. Drinking responsibly is important all year round but requires even more attention when celebrating over the holiday season. Keep yourself and others safe so everyone can celebrate in good cheer.

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism recommends drinking only one standard drink per hour. It also recommends drinking a non-alcoholic beverage between each drink. This will help you pace yourself during holiday celebrations.

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

Even if you think you know how your body reacts to alcohol, there is a lot going on in your system that will impair your ability to function properly. The National Institutes of Health has debunked a few common misconceptions that we have about alcohol:

Myth: You can safely operate a vehicle if you're not acting erratically.

Fact: Your coordination is impacted long before signs of intoxication are present. The beginning stages attack your reaction time, which can lead to dangerous situations on the road.

Myth: You can drink coffee to sober up.

Fact: You may notice a higher level of energy, but caffeine does nothing to help regain coordination or bring your reaction time back to normal. The only way to recover from intoxication is time.



Myth: Drinking alcohol keeps your body warm.

Fact: Alcohol opens small blood vessels closest to your skin, which makes them fill with warm blood. The fact that you might feel warm means nothing, as your brain's temperature regulation also is affected, enhancing the risk of hypothermia. It is, therefore,

crucial to dress appropriately if you'll be drinking outside this holiday season.

PLANNING AHEAD

When planning to attend any event where alcohol will be consumed, it is important to know how you will get home. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety

Administration, an average of 28 people died each day in 2016 due to impaired-driving accidents. Don't allow your family or friends to become a statistic.

A designated driver should be appointed beforehand. Remember, a DD is required to completely abstain from drinking alcohol. Driving after even

just a couple of drinks can affect your abilities and put you at risk for a DUI penalty.

If everyone wants to partake in the celebrations, be sure you will have access to a taxi or other driving service. There will be a small fee, but it won't compare to the major risks associated with drinking and driving.



Sled Safely

If you live in an area that receives its fair share of snow, you probably have taken a sled for a ride.

For many families, sledding is a holiday tradition, if the conditions are right. Be sure to take proper precautions to protect the children and adults while on the hill.

While sledding as a child,

you probably didn't realize how dangerous it can be. Now as a parent with safety in mind, you are likely aware of the steps you need to take to make sure sledding remains a safe, enjoyable family tradi-

tion for everyone involved.

FINDING THE RIGHT HILL

Your first level of responsibility with sledding is to find a suitable hill. There are many factors to think of before you

begin. The experts at Kidshealth.org have listed some extremely important things to look for.

- Choose a hill that isn't overly steep and leads to a long, flat bottom. This helps

your child's sled glide to a stop.

- Never attempt to sled on a hill that ends near a street, parking lot, pond or fence.

- Look for a clear path to the bottom of a hill. You should avoid obstacles such as bumps, rocks or other hazards that might cause the sled to leave the ground.

- Avoid sledding on icy hills. Aim for one with a coating of snow to create a softer landing spot in case your child falls off his sled.

PROPER ATTIRE

Always dress in heavy clothing and keep your ears and hands protected. Exposing skin to the snow for long periods of times can cause frostbite.

Children should wear helmets when participating in sledding. Kids Health experts recommend this as a crucial safety precaution for children 12 and under. Try to find a helmet designed for winter sports, as this it will be the most effective.

Forgo letting your children wear scarves. They can pose a risk of strangulation. Keep necks warm with a turtleneck instead.

SAFEST SLED

There are many different styles of sleds on the market. The safest option for children is one that can be steered and slowed down with a braking system. Avoid saucers, toboggans or tubes, as it is harder to influence where they will wind up.

Never use a substitute such as a large shovel or cardboard box. You might receive points for creativity, but these options pose serious safety risks.

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Managing Stress

The amount of stress caused by the holidays can have drastic effects on our moods and overall feelings. There seems to be a stressful situation everywhere you turn: crowded shopping malls, diet-ruining foods and holiday parties that cause a sense of social anxiety. Be sure to manage your emotional health this year.

Did you know there is a connection to stress and dangerous diseases such as heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes? The National Institute of Mental Health states that allowing stress to become chronic can lead to these diseases as well as depression and anxiety.

Routine stress is said to harm your body by never signaling your body to go back to normal functioning. This is when trouble starts and you should seek the help of a professional.

SLEEP HYGIENE

Sleep hygiene means paying attention to the routines surrounding sleep. Sometimes our sleeping schedules fluctuate depending on how busy we are. Following these tips from the National Sleep Foundation will get you in a good routine, which can help alleviate stress.

- Go to bed at the same time each night and wake at the same time each morning;

- Your bedroom should be a quiet, dark environment that is neither too hot nor cold;

- Make sure your bed is comfortable and is only used for sleeping and not for watching television or reading. You should eliminate distractions, such as tablets and cell phones from your sleeping area; and



- Avoid large meals before bedtime.

FIND TIME FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Physical and mental health rely on one another to optimize your overall well-being. The American Psychological Association recommends

exerting physical energy to assist in alleviating stressful feelings.

Rather than gathering the family for a typical movie night, plan a walk around the neighborhood. There will likely be many holiday decorations on your route to enjoy, making the activity fun

for everyone.

SET REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS

One big stress factor around Christmastime is the expectation to purchase gifts for everyone on your list. Be honest with yourself and your budget and set a number you

feel comfortable spending.

Overspending or charging large gifts to a credit card can be hard to overcome later and make stress last all year long.

Explain to young children that Christmas isn't only about gifts. Instead, begin fun traditions that they can pass down to their children one day.

Keeping Warm

Americans who live in regions that suffer from brutal winters will face many hazards this holiday season.

Ensuring you are prepared for the freezing temperatures is your best defense for staying healthy during the holidays.

IN THE CAR

Over the holidays, there are generally more vehicles on American highways as people travel to visit their friends and families. It is crucial to make sure your vehicle is in good working order if you're planning a road trip.

Becoming stranded during winter's bitter temperatures can lead to many dangerous situations such as frostbite, hypothermia and even death.

Before embarking on your trip, be sure to have a winter emergency kit in your vehicle in case you do become stranded. The Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention recommends stocking your car with a winter emergency kit including:

- **Booster cables or a jump box.** In case of a dead battery, you might be able to restore power and avoid being stuck in the cold.

- **Cell phone and a portable charger.** Be sure you have a way to contact help if you experience vehicle trouble.



- **Blankets and extra layers of clothes.** Depending on how long it will take help to arrive, you might need to use these supplies to keep warm.

The holidays are full of fun and cheer, but be sure to keep yourself safe when traveling to celebrate the festivities.

PREPARING YOUR HOME

Prior to the colder temperatures, you should take steps to

prepare your home to make sure it is safe and comfortable for the winter months.

Always have an expert inspect your heating system before you plan on having to use it. An early inspection gives you the opportunity to correct issues that will affect the system when the temperatures get frigid.

It can be dangerous if these problems are discovered

during the holidays, as heating and air companies are usually extremely busy and might have less staff on hand. You could be forced to endure a few days without heat, which can cause serious health conditions for people in the home.

DRESSING FOR OUTDOORS

Whether it's singing carols

or enjoying the beautiful lights around your neighborhood, you will find many activities to do outdoors during the holidays. Be sure to dress appropriately to avoid suffering from cold weather illnesses.

Don't forget to keep your head and ears warm as well as dressing in thermal underclothing if you'll be outside for long periods of time.