

Better You Handling the Holidays in Good Health



Staying healthy during the holidays requires some thought and pre-planning. Reflect on the meaning of the season, practice self-care and use healthy coping behaviors if you get stressed.

Take a few minutes to answer the questions below:

1. What contributes to your holiday stress?
2. What matters most to you this holiday season? What values do you think of at holiday time? Are you practicing them?
3. What do you and your family expect from this holiday season? Are your expectations realistic?
4. Are there new traditions you would like to create?

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Healthy holiday coping behaviors:

- Take a moment to pause
- Be grateful
- Practice deep breathing
- Laugh
- Be mindful and pay attention



Tune into your thoughts.

Your thoughts create your feelings, which create your actions, which create your results. List a negative thought in the space below, and practice replacing it with a positive or self-affirming thought.



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Strategies for self care during the holidays to help you enjoy the season more and eat less:

1. Don't overschedule yourself. Manage time by setting priorities and rest when your body tells you to.
2. Shop early or online, ask people what they want, and stick to your budget.
3. It is easier to get distracted from signals of physical hunger and satiety at social gatherings, especially if food is the main event. Do a Mind-Body Scan and listen to your body's signals of hunger and satiety.
4. Be a food snob. Skip the store-bought goodies, and if you don't love it, don't finish it. Savor the truly tasty seasonal foods.
5. Think of your appetite as an expense account. How much do you want to spend on appetizers or the entrée? Do you want to save room for dessert or have more turkey? Pay attention to what will satisfy you.
6. Pace your eating prior to the event so you will be hungry but not famished at mealtime. Ignore the old diet advice of "eat before you go to a party so you won't be tempted." You want to be hungry enough to enjoy your favorites.
7. Socialize away from the sight of the food. People who tend to overeat are "food suggestible" so just hanging around food causes them to eat more than they need.
8. Survey all of the food at a buffet before making your choices. Choose the foods that you really want most at that time and remind yourself that you can have the other foods at a later time.
9. If the food is so special, give it your full attention rather than eating on autopilot. Eat mindfully by reducing distractions and sitting down to eat - even if it's just a cookie. Appreciate the appearance and aroma of your food and savor one small bite at a time by putting your fork down. You'll eat less food but enjoy it more.
10. Be aware of the effects of alcohol on your food intake. And don't forget that many beverages contain calories too.
11. At family gatherings, do some of the cooking ahead of time, don't make everything from scratch, and ask for help. Buy some prepared healthy foods or make a healthy dish.
12. Be cautious about "obligatory eating." Avoid eating just because it is on the table, on your plate, because you paid for it, or because someone made it. Deal with Food Pushers with a polite but firm, "No thank you." If you're concerned about hurting their feelings, ask for the recipe or a small portion to take home with you for another meal.
13. Look for opportunities for physical activity - take a walk after dinner to enjoy the lights, take a few laps around the mall before it opens to do some window shopping or take guests to local attractions. Dance at parties!

Most importantly, delight all of your senses. Enjoy the company, the atmosphere, the entertainment, and the traditions as much, if not more, than the food!

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There are several ways to try and make healthier eating choices during holiday dinners

- The good news – 3 ounces of skinless turkey breast has about 100 calories and is a high protein, low fat choice. Just take it easy on the gravy!
- Canned pumpkin or applesauce can be used as a fat substitute in baked goods.
- You can reduce the sugar in recipes by 1/2 to 1/3 without significantly changing the taste – just add extra spices.
- Sweet potatoes have fiber, vitamin C and potassium. Skip the fat and marshmallows on top, and roast with apples, a little olive oil and cinnamon.
- Replace heavy cream in a recipe with fat-free half and half.
- If a recipe calls for eggs, 2 egg whites can replace one whole egg. You can also try using a chia egg. 1 Tbsp. chia seeds + 2.5 Tbsp. water = a chia egg.
- Use plain or Greek yogurt in dips and recipes instead of mayonnaise or sour cream.
- Pile on the vegetables – this time of year there are usually more vegetables to choose from.
- If you want to have a dessert that is homemade and decadent – follow the 3 bite rule: after 3 bites, our taste buds are completely used to the taste of what we are eating, so have 3 bites, eat slowly and savor the yumminess!