

Managing Holiday Stress

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December 2016



Heart-Healthy Holiday Gifts

With the holidays fast approaching, you might be frantically brainstorming ideas for holiday presents. Here are a few heart healthy options to consider! These ideas would make for great stocking stuffers, office holiday gift exchange, or even a friendly present.

- **Stress ball.** The holidays can be stressful so why not include a stress ball so your family and friends can work their arm muscles instead of turning to the candy jar to relieve stress.
- **Jump rope.** This is a great item to have around the house. When your kids go outside to run off steam, join them and jump a little rope while you watch them jump and play in the fall leaves.
- **Toothbrush.** Help keep those pearly whites clean with a new toothbrush.
- **Fruit.** Apples, oranges and grapefruits make for very healthy presents. Just make sure they don't get squished and give them in a timely manner so they are nice and fresh when the recipient receives them!
- **A new CD.** Everyone loves to sing loudly and dance around their house when no one is looking. Why not give your friends and loved ones their favorite CD and let them burn off those holiday calories while they have their own mini dance party!
- **Winter accessories.** When the weather changes and the temperature drops people tend to stay indoors more and therefore get less exercise. Give your co-workers a new hat, a scarf and a pair of gloves and that gives them no excuse to take a brisk walk around the block and admire their neighbor's holiday decorations.
- **A pedometer.** This nifty little tool helps you count the number of steps you take in a day. What a great way to get the office together and go walking briskly during lunch!
- **Recipe cards.** Do you have a lot of healthy recipes you love? Why not share the wealth. Pre-made or hand-made recipe cards with hand written healthy recipes are a heart-felt gift for all.
- **Cookbook.** Staying along with the share the wealth idea, check out the American Heart Association's variety of cookbooks. Choose one that best suits your recipient. Whether they're cooking for one, cooking for a family with kids, or looking for a quick and healthy meal, the American Heart Association offers a wide array of [cookbooks](#).
- **Water bottle.** Give them a BPA-free water bottle to take to work or stash in their purse then they will have no excuse for not staying hydrated.
- **Relaxation kit.** Stress is not good for anyone's health and the holidays are typically a stressful time of the year. Give your friends and loved ones a relaxation kit. Maybe include a few candles, maybe some incense, soaps, or a CD with soothing music.
- **Do they like art?** Maybe give them a day pass to a museum; they can enjoy the art while enjoying a nice warm escape from the cold and a bonus they get in some physical activity! How about giving them some new supplies to paint or a gift card to a craft/art store so they can buy their own.



HOW Stress AFFECTS YOUR HEALTH

Stress: We've all felt it. Sometimes stress can be a positive force, motivating you to perform well at your piano recital or job interview. But often — like when you're stuck in traffic — it's a negative force. If you experience stress over a prolonged period of time, it could become chronic — unless you take action.

A NATURAL REACTION

Have you ever found yourself with sweaty hands on a first date or felt your heart pound during a scary movie? Then you know you can feel stress in both your mind and body.

This automatic response developed in our ancient ancestors as a way to protect them from predators and other threats. Faced with danger, the body kicks into gear, flooding the body with hormones that elevate your heart rate, increase your blood pressure, boost your energy and prepare you to deal with the problem.

These days, you're not likely to face the threat of being eaten, but you probably do confront multiple challenges every day, such as meeting deadlines, paying bills and juggling childcare that make your body react the same way. As a result, your body's natural alarm system — the "fight or flight" response — may be stuck in the "on" position, and that can have serious consequences for your health.

PRESSURE POINTS

Even short-lived, minor stress can have an impact. You might get a stomachache before you have to give a presentation, for example.

... Some people don't know they have a problem until acute stress causes a heart attack or something worse.

More major acute stress, whether caused by a fight with your spouse or an event like an earthquake or terrorist attack, can have an even bigger impact.

Multiple studies have shown that these sudden emotional stresses — especially anger — can trigger heart attacks, arrhythmias and even sudden death.¹ Although this happens mostly in people who already have heart disease, some people don't know they have a problem until acute stress causes a heart attack or something worse.

CHRONIC STRESS

When stress starts interfering with your ability to live a normal life for an extended period, it becomes even more dangerous. The longer the stress lasts, the worse it is for both your mind and body.

You might feel fatigued, unable to concentrate or irritable for no good reason, for example. But chronic stress causes wear and tear on your body, too.

Stress can make existing problems worse.² In one study, for example, about half the participants saw improvements in chronic headaches after learning how to stop the stress-producing habit of "catastrophizing," or constantly thinking negative thoughts about their pain.³

Chronic stress may also cause disease, either because of changes in your body or the overeating, smoking and other bad habits people use to cope with stress.





apa.org/helpcenter
Learn more about managing stress

ONLINE RESOURCES



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Job strain — high demands coupled with low decision-making latitude — is associated with increased risk of coronary disease, for example.⁴ Other forms of chronic stress, such as depression and low levels of social support, have also been implicated in increased cardiovascular risk.

And once you're sick, stress can also make it harder to recover. One analysis of past studies, for instance, suggests that cardiac patients with so-called "Type D" personalities — characterized by chronic distress — face higher risks of bad outcomes.⁵

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Reducing your stress levels can not only make you feel better right now, but may also protect your health long-term.

In one study, researchers examined the association between "positive affect" — feelings like happiness, joy, contentment and enthusiasm — and the development of coronary heart disease over a decade.⁶ They found that for every one-point increase in positive affect on a five-point scale, the rate of heart disease dropped by 22 percent.

While the study doesn't prove that increasing positive affect decreases cardiovascular risks, the researchers recommend boosting your positive affect by making a little time for enjoyable activities every day.

Other strategies for reducing stress include:

- **Identify what's causing stress.** Monitor your state of mind throughout the day. If you feel stressed, write down the cause, your thoughts and your mood. Once you know what's bothering you, develop a plan for addressing it. That might mean setting more reasonable expectations for yourself and others or asking for help with household responsibilities, job assignments or other tasks. List all your commitments, assess your priorities and then eliminate any tasks that are not absolutely essential.
- **Build strong relationships.** Relationships can be a source of stress. Research has found that negative, hostile reactions with your spouse cause immediate changes in

stress-sensitive hormones, for example.⁷ But relationships can also serve as stress buffers. Reach out to family members or close friends and let them know you're having a tough time. They may be able to offer practical assistance and support, useful ideas or just a fresh perspective as you begin to tackle whatever is causing your stress.

- **Walk away when you're angry.** Before you react, take time to regroup by counting to 10. Then reconsider. Walking or other physical activities can also help you work off steam. Plus, exercise increases the production of endorphins, your body's natural mood-booster. Commit to a daily walk or other form of exercise — a small step that can make a big difference in reducing stress levels.
- **Rest your mind.** According to APA's 2012 *Stress in America*[™] survey, stress keeps more than 40 percent of adults lying awake at night. To help ensure you get the recommended seven or eight hours of shut-eye, cut back on caffeine, remove distractions such as television or computers from your bedroom, and go to bed at the same time each night. Research shows that activities like yoga and relaxation exercises not only help reduce stress, but also boost immune functioning.⁸
- **Get help.** If you continue to feel overwhelmed, consult with a psychologist or other licensed mental health professional who can help you learn how to manage stress effectively. He or she can help you identify situations or behaviors that contribute to your chronic stress and then develop an action plan for changing them.

¹ Krantz, D. S., Whittaker, K. S., & Sheps, D. S. (2011). "Psychosocial risk factors for coronary artery disease: Pathophysiologic mechanisms." In Allan R., Fisher, J. (Eds.), *In Heart and Mind: Evolution of Cardiac Psychology*, (pp. 91–113). Washington, DC: APA.

² Kiecolt-Glaser, J., & Glaser, R. Stress and health research homepage: <http://pni.osumc.edu>.

³ Thorn, B. E., Pence, L. B., et al. (2007). "A randomized clinical trial of targeted cognitive behavioral treatment to reduce catastrophizing in chronic headache sufferers." *Journal of Pain*, 8, 938–949.

⁴ Krantz, D. S., & McCeney, M. K. (2002). "Effects of psychological and social factors on organic disease: A critical assessment of research on coronary heart disease." *Annual Review of Psychology*, 53, 341–369.

⁵ Denollet, J., et al. (2010). "A general propensity to psychological distress affects cardiovascular outcomes: Evidence from research on the type D (distressed) personality profile." *Circulation: Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes*, 3, 546–557.

⁶ Davidson, K. W., Mostofsky, E., & Whang, W. (2010). "Don't worry, be happy: Positive affect and reduced 10-year incident coronary heart disease: The Canadian Nova Scotia Health Survey." *European Heart Journal*, 31(9), 1065–1070.

⁷ Kiecolt-Glaser, J., & Glaser, R. Stress and health research homepage: <http://pni.osumc.edu>.

⁸ Ibid.





Probablemente, todos hemos sentido estrés. A veces es por un momento breve y debido a alguna situación, como estar en un tráfico pesado. Otras veces, es más persistente y complejo como cuando tenemos problemas con nuestras relaciones, algún miembro de la familia está enfermo o debido a la muerte del cónyuge. A veces el estrés nos puede motivar a lograr ciertas tareas.

Estrés Peligroso

El estrés es peligroso cuando interfiere con su habilidad de vivir una vida normal por un período extenso de tiempo. **Usted puede sentirse "fuera de control" y no tener idea de lo que debe hacer, aún si la causa es relativamente insignificante.** Esto a su vez puede causarle que usted esté continuamente fatigado, no se pueda concentrar o esté irritable en situaciones normalmente tranquilas. El estrés prolongado puede aumentar cualquier problema emocional que haya surgido de eventos traumáticos en su pasado, e incrementar pensamientos suicidas.

Reacciones Naturales

El estrés también puede afectar su salud física debido a **los mecanismos internos de respuesta que tiene el cuerpo humano.** Usted puede sudar con tan solo pensar en una fecha importante, o sentir que su corazón se acelera mientras mira una película de miedo. Estas reacciones son causadas por hormonas que los científicos creen ayudaron a nuestros antepasados a lidiar con las amenazas e incertidumbres del mundo en que vivían.

Si la causa de su estrés es temporal, los efectos físicos usualmente son de corta duración. En un estudio, la presión de tomar exámenes aumentó el grado de acné entre estudiantes de universidad, independientemente de cómo se alimentaron o durmieron. La condición disminuyó después que pasaron los exámenes. El dolor abdominal y la irregularidad también han sido relacionados con el estrés situacional.

Mientras más tiempo su mente se sienta estresada, más tiempo su sistema de reacciones físicas se mantendrá activado. Esto puede llevarle a mayores problemas de salud.

Desgaste Físico

El dicho que el estrés envejece a una persona más rápido que lo normal fue recientemente verificado en un estudio de mujeres que habían pasado muchos años cuidando niños incapacitados o muy enfermos. Debido a que sus cuerpos no fueron capaces de regenerar completamente las células sanguíneas, se encontró que estas mujeres eran físicamente diez años mayores que su edad cronológica.

Reacciones al estrés a largo plazo pueden alterar el sistema inmunológico del cuerpo en formas que están asociadas con otras condiciones de envejecimiento como son la fragilidad, descenso en funcionalidad, enfermedad coronaria, osteoporosis, artritis inflamatoria, diabetes tipo 2, y algunos tipos de cáncer. Las investigaciones también sugieren que el estrés imposibilita la capacidad del cerebro de bloquear ciertas toxinas y otras moléculas más grandes, potencialmente dañinas. Esta condición también es común en pacientes que sufren la enfermedad de Alzheimer.

Aunque el estrés emocional que surge sorpresivamente, ha sido relacionado con la disfunción severa del corazón en personas normalmente saludables, los científicos no están seguros si el estrés crónico por si solo causa enfermedad del corazón. Lo que si está claro es que **el estrés excesivo puede empeorar factores de riesgo existentes como la hipertensión y altos niveles de colesterol**. Los estudios también demuestran que las personas que reaccionan con coraje o que exhiben hostilidad frecuente--una conducta común en los que están bajo estrés--tienen un riesgo mayor de padecer una enfermedad del corazón.

Sentimientos de desesperación que acompañan al estrés pueden fácilmente tornarse en depresión crónica, una condición que le lleva a descuidar una dieta balanceada y hábitos de actividades. Esto a su vez, le puede aumentar el riesgo de llegar a tener un ataque al corazón, obesidad y disfunción renal.

El estrés también puede complicar su habilidad de recuperación en caso de una enfermedad seria. Un estudio sueco encontró que las mujeres que han sufrido ataques al corazón tienden a tener menos oportunidades de recuperación si también se encuentran experimentando estrés matrimonial como la infidelidad, el abuso de alcohol, o la enfermedad física o psiquiátrica de la pareja. De otra parte, el adiestramiento en el manejo del estrés es un método probado para ayudar a una recuperación rápida luego de un ataque al corazón.

Qué puede hacer

Aprender a lidiar con el estrés efectivamente es un esfuerzo que vale la pena, aún si usted ya se considera capaz de manejar cualquier situación que la vida le presente. Muchos de los estresantes más comunes a largo plazo (enfermedad en la familia, recuperación de heridas, presiones de trabajo) surgen muchas veces de forma concurrente y sin previo aviso.

El manejo del estrés es particularmente valioso si su familia tiene historia de hipertensión y otras formas de la enfermedad del corazón.

- **Identifique la causa.** Usted puede encontrar que su estrés surge de algo que es fácil de corregir. Un psicólogo puede ayudarle a definir y analizar estos estresantes y a desarrollar un plan de acción para lidiar con ellos.
- **Vigile sus estados de ánimo.** Si usted se siente estresado durante el día, escriba qué lo causó, junto con sus pensamientos y estado de ánimo. Nuevamente, usted puede encontrar que la causa es menos seria de lo que pensó en primera instancia.
- **Haga tiempo para usted al menos dos o tres veces a la semana.** Aún diez minutos al día de "tiempo personal" le puede ayudar a refrescar su visión mental y reducir o detener los sistemas de respuesta al estrés que tiene su cuerpo. Apague el teléfono, pase tiempo solo/a en su habitación, haga ejercicios, o medite con su música favorita.
- **Aléjese por un momento de la situación cuando siente coraje.** Antes de reaccionar, tome tiempo mentalmente para calmarse, contando hasta diez. Entonces observe la situación nuevamente. El caminar u otras actividades físicas le ayudarán a liberar presión.
- **Analice su horario.** Estudie sus prioridades y delegue las tareas que pueda. Por ejemplo, ordene comida fuera después de un día fuerte, comparta responsabilidades en el hogar. Elimine tareas que debería hacer pero no son indispensables.
- **Establezca estándares razonables para usted y los demás.** No espere perfección.

coping with stress



Stress and Stressors

Stress is something that is part of normal life, in that it is experienced by everyone from time-to-time. However, some people suffer from stress which is so frequent or so severe that it can seriously impact on their quality of life. Stress can come from a huge range of sources (*stressors*), such as:

- ◇ Relationships with others
- ◇ Work-related issues
- ◇ Study demands
- ◇ Coping with illness
- ◇ Life changes, such as marriage, retirement, divorce
- ◇ Day-to-day activities and tasks
- ◇ Positive events, such as organising holidays or parties
- ◇ Juggling many roles or tasks at the same time



Some people are aware of what tends to trigger their stress, and this increases their ability to either prevent stress or to handle it more effectively. Many others are less able to deal with stress, and identifying stressors is a key step in this. If you often experience stress, take some time to consider what tends to set it off for you.

Symptoms of Stress

Some people do not even notice that they are stressed until symptoms begin to occur, including:

- ◇ Irritability or moodiness
- ◇ Interrupted sleep
- ◇ Worrying or feeling of anxiety
- ◇ Back and neck pain
- ◇ Frequent headaches, minor to migraine
- ◇ Upset stomach
- ◇ Increased blood pressure
- ◇ Changes in appetite
- ◇ Rashes or skin breakouts
- ◇ Chest pains
- ◇ Making existing physical problems worse
- ◇ More susceptible to cold/flu and slower recovery

These symptoms reduce quality of life, and people suffering from stress may notice that work performance or relationships suffer more as a result. You may be able to use some the strategies listed here, or you may find it useful to consult a professional for more help.

Stress Management Tips

- 1) **Identify your stressors**, and see if there are some things within your control to manage better. Some things will be beyond your control, for example if you work a job that is based on working towards deadlines then you can't change this without changing jobs. But perhaps you can control some aspects, such as scheduling to have at least a short lunch break each day, or to go to bed earlier so that you have more energy to cope with the daytime.
- 2) Build **regular exercise** into your life - as well as being part of a healthy, balanced lifestyle and giving you more energy, many people find that working out at the gym or playing sport helps them to unwind.
- 3) Make sure that you **eat and sleep well**.
- 4) **Take time out** for family, friends and recreational activities. Most of us know that this is important but we do not all do it. If you find it hard to make time for this, perhaps you need to take deliberate steps to have time out, such as set aside one evening a week where you meet up with friends or enjoy a hobby, or set aside one day of the weekend for relaxing at home.
- 5) **Problem-solving techniques** can be a useful way of clarifying the problem, brainstorming possible solutions, and then choosing one to put into action after listing the pros and cons of each option. See the handout *Problem Solving* for more details about this.
- 6) **Learn calming techniques** such as controlled breathing and progressive muscle relaxation, to train your mind and body to become more relaxed. These techniques require practice but can be helpful with regular use. See handouts *Calming Technique* and *Progressive Muscle Relaxation*.
- 7) You may wish to speak to a professional about **assertiveness training and communication skills** which can help you to deal with challenging situations more effectively, thereby reducing stress. See the handout *Assertive Communication*.
- 8) Last but definitely not least, consider whether there is **negative thinking** which is contributing to your stress. Negative thinking can make us worry more than is necessary, increasing stress, and generally does not motivate us to take positive actions. See the handouts *Thinking & Feeling*, *Analysing Your Thinking* and *Changing Your Thinking*.



Exercise and stress: Get moving to manage stress

Exercise in almost any form can act as a stress reliever. Being active can boost your feel-good endorphins and distract you from daily worries.

By Mayo Clinic Staff



You know that exercise does your body good, but you're too busy and stressed to fit it into your routine. Hold on a second — there's good news when it comes to exercise and stress.

Virtually any form of exercise, from aerobics to yoga, can act as a stress reliever. If you're not an athlete or even if you're out of shape, you can still make a little exercise go a long way toward stress management. Discover the connection between exercise and stress relief — and why exercise should be part of your stress management plan.

Exercise and stress relief

Exercise increases your overall health and your sense of well-being, which puts more pep in your step every day. But exercise also has some direct stress-busting benefits.

- **It pumps up your endorphins.** Physical activity helps bump up the production of your brain's feel-good neurotransmitters, called endorphins. Although this function is often referred to as a runner's high, a rousing game of tennis or a nature hike also can contribute to this same feeling.
- **It's meditation in motion.** After a fast-paced game of racquetball or several laps in the pool, you'll often find that you've forgotten the day's irritations and concentrated only on your body's movements.

As you begin to regularly shed your daily tensions through movement and physical activity, you may find that this focus on a single task, and the resulting energy and optimism, can help you remain calm and clear in everything you do.

- **It improves your mood.** Regular exercise can increase self-confidence, it can relax you, and it can lower the symptoms associated with mild depression and anxiety. Exercise can also improve your sleep, which is often disrupted by stress, depression and anxiety. All of these exercise benefits can ease your stress levels and give you a sense of command over your body and your life.

Put exercise and stress relief to work for you

A successful exercise program begins with a few simple steps.

- **Consult with your doctor.** If you haven't exercised for some time and you have health concerns, you may want to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.
- **Walk before you run.** Build up your fitness level gradually. Excitement about a new program can lead to overdoing it and possibly even injury.

For most healthy adults, the Department of Health and Human Services recommends getting at least 150 minutes a week of moderate aerobic activity (such as brisk walking or swimming) or 75 minutes a week of vigorous aerobic activity (such as running). You also can do a combination of moderate and vigorous activity.

Also, incorporate strength training exercises at least twice a week.

- **Do what you love.** Virtually any form of exercise or movement can increase your fitness level while decreasing your stress. The most important thing is to pick an activity that you enjoy. Examples include walking, stair climbing, jogging, bicycling, yoga, tai chi, gardening, weightlifting and swimming.
- **Pencil it in.** Although your schedule may necessitate a morning workout one day and an evening activity the next, carving out some time to move every day helps you make your exercise program an ongoing priority.

Stick with it

Starting an exercise program is just the first step. Here are some tips for sticking with a new routine or reinvigorating a tired workout:

- **Set SMART goals.** Write down SMART goals — specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-limited goals.

If your primary goal is to reduce stress in your life and recharge your batteries, your specific goals might include committing to walking during your lunch hour three times a week or, if needed, finding a baby sitter to watch your children so that you can slip away to attend a cycling class.

- **Find a friend.** Knowing that someone is waiting for you to show up at the gym or the park can be a powerful incentive. Working out with a friend, co-worker or family member often brings a new level of motivation and commitment to your workouts.
- **Change up your routine.** If you've always been a competitive runner, take a look at other less competitive options that may help with stress reduction, such as Pilates or yoga classes. As an added bonus, these kinder, gentler workouts may enhance your running while also decreasing your stress.
- **Exercise in increments.** Even brief bouts of activity offer benefits. For instance, if you can't fit in one 30-minute walk, try three 10-minute walks instead. Interval training, which entails brief (60 to 90 seconds) bursts of intense activity at almost full effort, is being shown to be a safe, effective and efficient way of gaining many of the benefits of longer duration exercise. What's most important is making regular physical activity part of your lifestyle.

Whatever you do, don't think of exercise as just one more thing on your to-do list. Find an activity you enjoy — whether it's an active tennis match or a meditative meander down to a local park and back — and make it part of your regular routine. Any form of physical activity can help you unwind and become an important part of your approach to easing stress.

15 Surefire Strategies to Stay Fit From Thanksgiving to New Years

Sophia Breene, 11/27/13



Between pies and cross-country travel, it can be pretty tough to stay active during the holiday season. A cornucopia of family obligations, work parties, and last-minute shopping means that hitting the gym often gets delayed or crossed off the schedule altogether. Not this year! There are 35 days between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day, and we're determined to make the most of them. We've come up with 15 smart strategies, tips, tricks, and motivational techniques to make fitness part of the celebration all holiday season long. Read on to learn how to keep up your exercise routine this winter, Christmas cookies be darned.

1. Get out there

Snuggling under the blankets with a mug of hot chocolate is fine and dandy, but it probably won't help you out in the fitness department. Instead of baking cookies or playing board games, pass the time with an active pursuit like snowshoeing, hiking, or even building snowmen or igloos.

2. Set a challenge

Each year, Runner's World magazine challenges readers to run every single day (logging at least one mile per day) between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. Pounding the pavement not your style? Create your own challenge, whether it involves trying a new bodyweight exercise every day, testing different yoga poses, or experimenting with an unfamiliar running workout.

3. Make it official

Sign up for a race, competition, or fitness-y vacation like a hiking or bike trip in January or February so you have a good reason (and plenty of motivation) to stay in shape over the holidays.

4. Try feet-first sightseeing

If you're traveling or going on vacation, explore a new city on foot or bike instead of in a car or by public transportation (weather permitting).

5. Find a workout buddy

Rolling out of bed for a 6 am gym sesh is much harder to skip when you're one half of a dynamic workout duo. Enlist a fitness-minded friend or family member (especially if you're traveling) to be your holiday exercise buddy. Encourage each other to lace up the sneakers for pre-dinner workouts and post-shopping trip runs.

6. Treat yourself

No, not to that extra slice of pumpkin pie. If it's within your budget, indulge in new workout clothing or fitness equipment before Thanksgiving to boost motivation throughout the holiday season.



7. Start a fitness tradition

There are tons of family-friendly holiday-themed running events in most areas. Sign up the whole family (don't forget the costumes) for a fun, goofy Turkey Trot or Jingle Jog. Before you know it, the annual race will become a family tradition.

8. Include everyone

Working out can often be a solitary activity, which may explain why many people skip the gym when friends and family are in town. Make it a group activity by inviting visitors to join you at the gym or a favorite exercise class.

9. Find a promotion

Many gyms and exercise studios offer deals and specials during the holidays. Do some snooping and sign up if you find a sweet deal. If you've recently joined a gym, take advantage of a free consultation with a personal trainer (most fitness facilities offer this perk) to learn some new moves.



10. Act like a kid

Childhood winter favorites like sledding, snowball fights, and ice-skating get the heart pumping. Head outside for a sneaky (and super fun) workout.

11. Be a mall rat

With a mile-long to-do list before the big holiday get-together, there's just no time for exercise, right? Wrong-o: Simply lace up your sneakers and powerwalk between errands. (This is especially doable at a mall or shopping center.)

12. Cut the rug

Being the first person on the dance floor at the holiday party means you're A) the coolest person in the room and B) getting your rear in gear.

13. Do some DIYardwork

Whether it's raking leaves or shoveling snow, yard work is an unexpected way to get the heart rate up and work out major muscle groups.

14. Watch TV

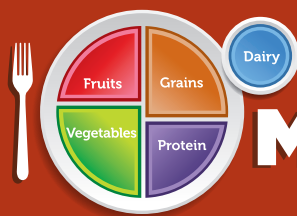
Yep, sometimes hanging out in front of the tube can be good for you. If the weather outside is truly frightful, pop in a workout DVD (or for a cheaper version, pull up a YouTube fitness video) and get sweaty. Or, use TV time to work on mobility and recovery by foam rolling, icing, or stretching out with straps.

15. Work towards a goal

Set a specific, tangible goal to accomplish during the holiday season. There are 35 days between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day, which is the perfect amount of time to really nail that push-up form, learn to do Crow pose, or master an 8-minute mile. Or, you know, any other fitness goal that strikes your fancy.



United States Department of Agriculture



MyPlate

Holiday makeover



visit **choosemyplate.gov** for healthier options during the holidays

tweak the sweets



VS



fruits make delicious desserts

cheers to good health



VS



drink water to manage calories

bake healthier



VS



use recipes with pureed fruits instead of butter or oil

spice it up



VS



use spices and herbs instead of sugar and salt

brighten your meal



VS



fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables

skim the fat



VS



try skim evaporated milk instead of heavy cream

swap the grains



VS



choose whole wheat flour instead of white flour

go easy on the gravy



VS



a little bit of gravy goes a long way



Stay Mindful with 4 Tips for Holiday Eating

Reviewed by Wendy Marcason, RDN

Published December 22, 2015

The holidays are a time to enjoy friends, family and food. And, contrary to popular belief, you can have all three without putting on the extra pounds!

On average, **Americans gain approximately one to two pounds during the holiday season.** While this weight gain isn't dramatic, research shows it tends to stick and accumulate over the years. Luckily, those pounds can be avoided through mindful eating in moderation and a few simple strategies.

In preparation for a big holiday party or feast, do not skip meals throughout the day as this may result in overeating. It is especially important to have breakfast, as research shows that those who eat this important morning meal tend to consume fewer calories throughout the day. Include lots of fiber in your diet by eating fruits, vegetables and whole grains. High-fiber foods are high in volume and will satisfy hunger, but are lower in calories.

Holiday meals tend to be large, buffet-style and include second and third helpings. While one might not eat an entire cake, a common mistake is eating large portions of foods that are perceived as healthy. It's important to include nutrient-rich foods in your diet, but also remember that these foods have calories as well and should be eaten in moderation. Using this approach at the holiday dinner table will allow you to maintain a healthful eating plan — one that can also include dessert.

There are many strategies to help you avoid overeating. Using a smaller plate, for instance, allows you to put less food on your plate and encourages proper portion sizes. Also, start by filling your plate with vegetables and salad before going to the entrees and desserts. Eating a salad before your meal can help you eat fewer calories overall. Eat slowly and savor every bite, and before you go back for seconds wait 10 minutes to see if you really are still hungry.

Finally, after dinner, get some physical activity. This is a great time to go for a walk and catch up with family members, or play catch or a game of basketball with the kids. For more information on how to eat healthy, contact a registered dietitian nutritionist in your area.

Source: <http://www.eatright.org/resource/health/lifestyle/holidays/a-healthy-approach-to-holiday-eating>

How to Fight Off Food Cravings

Is it hard to avoid fattening foods and stick with the healthy meals and snacks you've planned? Or, do you sometimes eat because of your feelings, stress, or boredom when you are not physically hungry? If you answered yes to either of these questions, try the "**4-D**" steps to cope with those food cravings.

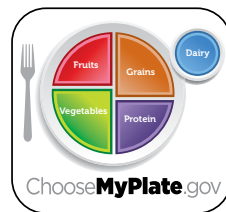
- **D**elay
Delay giving in to the craving for at least 10 minutes. Cravings come and go but they usually pass if you can wait a few minutes. Take the 10 minutes to think about how you will feel if you give in to the craving vs. how you will feel if you are able to stick to your meal plan. Use the time to complete the rest of the "**4-D**" steps.
- **D**istract
Go distract yourself with an activity which cannot be done while eating. Take a brisk walk, knit, play solitaire, call a friend, weed the garden, or take a bubble bath. Find other activities that will occupy your mind and body to help you forget about the craving.
- **D**eep Breathing
Slowly take in a deep breath in and then slowly exhale. Close your eyes and visualize a place that makes you feel happy. Repeat this several times. Deep breathing helps you relax. This is very beneficial for managing stress-related eating.
- **D**rink Water
Drinking water keeps your hands and mouth busy plus helps keep your stomach full. Sometimes thirst can give hunger pangs!

Getting enough sleep, eating balanced meals and snacks, choosing foods high in fiber like fresh fruit, vegetables and whole grains, plus evenly spacing your foods throughout the day are other essentials for preventing food cravings!

10 tips

Nutrition Education Series

make healthier holiday choices

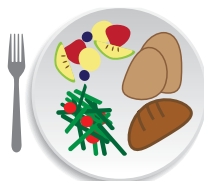


10 tips for a healthier holiday

The holidays are often filled with time-honored traditions that include some of our favorite meals and foods. As you celebrate, think of little changes you can make this holiday season to create healthier meals and active days.

1 create MyPlate makeovers

Makeover your favorite holiday dishes. Use My Recipe on SuperTracker to improve holiday recipes and get healthier results. Go to <https://www.supertracker.usda.gov/myrecipe.aspx>.



6 tweak the sweet

For dessert, try baked apples with cinnamon and a sprinkle of sugar instead of apple pie. Invite your guests to make their own parfait with colorful sliced fruit and low-fat yogurt.



2 enjoy all the food groups at your celebration

Prepare whole-grain crackers with hummus as an appetizer; add unsalted nuts and black beans to a green-leaf salad; include fresh fruit at the dessert table; use low-fat milk instead of heavy cream in your casseroles. Share healthier options during your holiday meal.

3 make sure your protein is lean

Turkey; roast beef; fresh ham; beans; and some types of fish, such as cod or flounder, are lean protein choices. Trim fat before cooking meats. Go easy on the sauces and gravies—they can be high in saturated fat and sodium.

4 cheers to good health

Quench your thirst with low-calorie options. Drink water with lemon or lime slices. Offer seltzer water with a splash of 100% fruit juice.



5 bake healthier

Use recipes with unsweetened applesauce or mashed ripe bananas instead of butter. Try cutting the amount of sugar listed in recipes in half. Use spices to add flavor such as cinnamon, allspice, or nutmeg instead of salt.



7 be the life of the party

Laugh, mingle, dance, and play games. Focus on fun and enjoy the company of others.

8 make exercise a part of the fun

Make being active part of your holiday tradition. Have fun walking and talking with family and friends after a holiday meal. Give gifts that encourage others to practice healthy habits such as workout DVDs, running shoes, and reusable water bottles.



9 enjoy leftovers

Create delicious new meals with your leftovers. Add turkey to soups or salads. Use extra veggies in omelets, sandwiches, or stews. The possibilities are endless!

10 give to others

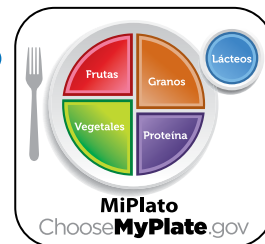
Spend time providing foods or preparing meals for those who may need a little help. Give food to a local food bank or volunteer to serve meals at a shelter during the holiday season.



10 consejos Serie de Educación en Nutrición

seleccione opciones saludables para los días feriados

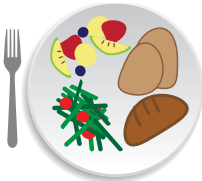
10 consejos para feriados saludables



Los días feriados son oportunidades para dedicar tiempo a celebrar tradiciones que incluyen nuestras comidas y platos favoritos. Mientras celebra piense en pequeños cambios que pueda hacer esos días feriados para crear comidas saludables y mantenerse activo.

1 crea MiPlato renovado

Renueve sus platos favoritos. Use "My Recipe" en SuperTracker para mejorar sus recetas especiales y hacerlas más saludables. Visita <https://www.SuperTracker.usda.gov/myrecipe.aspx>.



2 en sus celebraciones disfrute los alimentos de cada uno de los grupos

Para empezar sirva galletas integrales con "hummus," adicione nueces sin sal y frijoles negros a una ensalada de verduras; en sus guisos o cazuelas use leche baja en grasa en vez de crema. Comparta opciones saludables en sus comidas de días festivos.

3 asegúrese que la proteína que consuma sea magra

Pavo, carne de res, jamón, legumbres y algunas variedades de pescado como bacalao o lenguado son opciones magras. Cuando prepare carnes, corte y retire la grasa antes de cocinar. Sea moderado con las salsas y los aliños, éstos pueden contener cantidades considerables de grasa y sodio.

4 celebre la buena salud

Sacie su sed con opciones bajas en calorías. Tome agua con jugo o rodajas de limón. Ofrezca agua con gas mezclada con un poquito de jugo 100% fruta.



5 hornee productos saludables

Use recetas con puré de manzana sin azúcar o puré de plátanos en vez de mantequilla. Trate de disminuir la cantidad de azúcar en la mitad de lo que indica la receta. Use especias para adicionar sabor como canela, clavo de olor o nuez moscada.



6 cambie los dulces

Para el postre, pruebe manzanas horneadas con canela y azúcar roceada en vez de pie de manzana. Ofrezca a sus invitados la oportunidad de preparar su propio "parfait" con tajadas de frutas multicolores y yogur bajo en grasa.



7 sea el centro de la fiesta

Ría, baile y juegue. Enfóquese en la diversión y goce de la compañía de otros.

8 haga que el ejercicio sea parte de la diversión

Haga que el ejercicio sea parte de la tradición de un día festivo. Diviértase caminando y hablando con la familia y los amigos después de la cena. Dé regalos que motiven a otros a practicar hábitos saludables como DVDs de ejercicios, zapatillas y botellas reusables de agua.



9 aproveche de las sobras

Prepare platos con las sobras del día anterior. Añada carne de pavo a sus sopas o ensaladas. Use vegetales en sus tortillas francesas, sándwich o sopas. ¡Las posibilidades son interminables!

10 regale

Dedique tiempo a preparar comidas o proveer alimentos a aquellos que necesiten ayuda. Done alimentos al banco local de alimentos o participe como voluntario durante la temporada de fiestas para servir comidas en los comedores comunales.





HOLIDAY WEIGHT AND HOW TO AVOID IT

by Doreen Lerner, PhD

WHEN WE THINK ABOUT THE HOLIDAYS MANY THINGS COME TO MIND – GIFTS, SHOPPING, PARTIES, FAMILY, DECORATING, LONG TO-DO LISTS AND DELICIOUS HOLIDAY TREATS.

STRATEGIES FOR AVOIDING HOLIDAY WEIGHT GAIN

The holiday season is a busy time, and there are eating opportunities everywhere we go, such as family gatherings, office parties with trays of home-baked treats in the

lunchroom, holiday and end-of-semester programs at our kids' schools, treat samples being given away as we make our way through the stores to do our holiday shopping and catalogs in our mailboxes with mouth-watering photo spreads on every page. We're really busy, perhaps too busy to prepare the healthy meals we might otherwise prepare.

Here are a few tips that will help you negotiate this joyful time with minimum risk to your weight management goals:

- **Focus on maintaining your current weight.** Challenging yourself to lose weight over the holidays is setting yourself up for failure.
- **Don't gorge on any special holiday food** because you only get to eat it once a year. With luck, you'll still be around to enjoy it next year. On the other hand, don't deprive yourself of anything you want to taste. Instead, take a mindful bite, savoring the sight, taste, aroma, mouth feel and sound of each special holiday treat. Eating like this leads to increased pleasure, quicker satisfaction and decreased risk for weight gain.
- **Avoid the trap of thinking you can eat what you want** because you can just start over in the New Year. It doesn't get any easier just because it's January – there are always other reasons to indulge and to celebrate.
- **Keep up your exercise routine.** This will also help reduce holiday stress.
- **Keep tabs on yourself.** Write down what you eat, weigh yourself if you want to or try on your favorite clothes to make sure they still fit.
- **Create meaning beyond the food** by creating new traditions that have nothing to do with food. For example, change "in our family we always have chocolate cinnamon bread with whipped cream on Christmas morning" into "in our family we always play in the snow (or on the beach), or go for a long walk/take food and gifts to the homeless shelter on Christmas morning."
- **Sometimes, eating a particular food is our way of remembering a lost loved one.** If that applies to you, find another way to remember them, like sharing memories with family members.
- **Remember all the reasons why reaching and maintaining a healthy weight is important to you.**
- **Remember, unless you're an elite athlete, you're unlikely to be able to "exercise off" weeks of overindulgence.**

Monthly Health Challenge - Squat Jump Challenge



Are you looking for a leg work-out that does not require weights? Squat jumps are a great exercise that strengthens your leg muscles which can be performed virtually anywhere. Squat jumps help tone your hamstrings, quads, calves, buttock, and abdominals. Squat jumps can also be considered a total body workout since it can increase the heart rate if done repeatedly.

Jump Squat



How to perform a squat jump

1. Stand with the feet shoulder width apart
2. Squat down as if you were performing a normal squat. Make sure to keep your back straight, and chest up.
3. As your thighs become parallel to the floor, push through the ball of your feet and jump upwards as high as you can.
4. Control your landing. When you feet touch the ground, immediately perform another squat and then jump.
5. Repeat until the desired numbers of reps are completed.

*To make the squat jump easier, instead of jumping, lift up on the ball on your feet (use only tippy toes). To make the squat jump more difficult, add weight like a barbell.

For beginners, please follow the Easy Track (E). For difficult track, follow the Challenging track (C).

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 (E) 6 (C) 25	2 (E) 8 (C) 30	3 (E) 10 (C) 35
4 (E) 12 (C) Rest	5 (E) Rest (C) 40	6 (E) 12 (C) 45	7 (E) 16 (C) 50	8 (E) 20 (C) Rest	9 (E) 25 (C) 60	10 (E) Rest (C) 70
11 (E) 25 (C) 75	12 (E) 30 (C) Rest	13 (E) 35 (C) 85	14 (E) 40 (C) 90	15 (E) Rest (C) 100	16 (E) 40 (C) Rest	17 (E) 45 (C) 110
18 (E) 50 (C) 120	19 (E) 55 (C) 125	20 (E) Rest (C) Rest	21 (E) 55 (C) 130	22 (E) 60 (C) 140	23 (E) 65 (C) 150	24 (E) Rest (C) Rest
25 (E) 65 (C) 160	26 (E) 70 (C) 175	27 (E) 75 (C) 180	28 (E) 80 (C) Rest	29 (E) 85 (C) 190	30 (E) 90 (C) 200	31 (E) 100 (C) 225

Desafío del mes para estar saludable: Sentadillas con Salto



¿Está buscando un ejercicio de piernas que no requiera de pesas? Las sentadillas con salto es un gran ejercicio que fortifica los músculos de sus piernas y que puede ser realizado en cualquier lugar. Las sentadillas con saltos ayudan a tonificar sus músculos isquiotibiales, cuádriceps, pantorrillas, glúteos y abdominales. Las sentadillas con saltos pueden también ser considerados un ejercicio completo debido a que incrementa los latidos del corazón si las hace repetidamente.

Jump Squat



Como realizar las sentadillas con salto

1. Párese con los pies separados a la altura de los hombros
2. Realice una sentadilla como lo haría normalmente. Asegúrese de mantener la espalda derecha y el pecho levantado
3. Cuando sus muslos se alinean paralelamente al suelo empuje el talón de sus pies y salte hacia arriba lo más alto que pueda
4. Controle su caída. Inmediatamente después que sus pies toquen el suelo realice otra sentadilla y luego salte
5. Repita este ejercicio hasta alcanzar el número sentadillas con salto deseado

* Para hacerlo más fácil, en vez de saltar, póngase en punta de pies (usando solo la puntita de los dedos del pie). Para aumentar la dificultad de la sentadilla con salto agrega el uso de una barra de peso.

Para principiantes siga el entrenamiento con la letra (P) Para avanzados siga el entrenamiento con la letra (A)

Domingo	Lunes	Martes	Miércoles	Jueves	Viernes	Sábado
				1 (P) 6 (A) 25	2 (P) 8 (A) 30	3 (P) 10 (A) 35
4 (P) 12 (A) Rest	5 (P) Rest (A) 40	6 (P) 12 (A) 45	7 (P) 16 (A) 50	8 (P) 20 (A) Rest	9 (P) 25 (A) 60	10 (P) Rest (A) 70
11 (P) 25 (A) 75	12 (P) 30 (A) Rest	13 (P) 35 (A) 85	14 (P) 40 (A) 90	15 (P) Rest (A) 100	16 (P) 40 (A) Rest	17 (P) 45 (A) 110
18 (P) 50 (A) 120	19 (P) 55 (A) 125	20 (P) Rest (A) Rest	21 (P) 55 (A) 130	22 (P) 60 (A) 140	23 (P) 65 (A) 150	24 (P) Rest (A) Rest
25 (P) 65 (A) 160	26 (P) 70 (A) 175	27 (P) 75 (A) 180	28 (P) 80 (A) Rest	29 (P) 85 (A) 190	30 (P) 90 (A) 200	31 (P) 100 (A) 225

Sweet Potato & Kale Minestrone

Serves 4

*Chef Raquel graduated with highest honors from the culinary program at the Institute of Culinary Education after completing her externship at Le Bernardin in NYC. In 2009, Chef Raquel created **A Pinch of Salt, LLC** offering hands-on cooking instruction focusing on the preparation of healthy, gourmet, yet practical and inexpensive meals. Currently, Chef Raquel partners with The Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport (CCGB) providing extensive cooking education at local food pantries and community meal programs. Chef Raquel also provides outreach and cooking education for the Bridgeport Farmers Market Collaborative at the 6 farmers markets. This builds on her previous commitment with Wellness in the Schools, a NYC based nonprofit focusing on providing public school students nutritious meals which are reinforced through cooking educating in the classrooms and gardening. Chef Raquel is passionate about educating youth groups, families, seniors and communities on the importance of healthy cooking, understanding nutritional information, stretching food dollars, utilizing farmers' markets and community gardens.*

Ingredients:

1 large yellow onion, minced
3 carrots, cut into ½ inch half-moons
2 stalks of celery, cut into thin ½ inch half-moons
2 cloves of garlic, smashed
fresh thyme sprigs or 1 tsp. dried thyme and/or 1 tsp. dried oregano
1 bay leaf
1 (26-ounce) can low-sodium diced tomatoes
4 to 6 cups low-sodium chicken stock, chicken broth or water
2 sweet potatoes, peeled and diced
8 to 10 ounces kale, stemmed and washed
1 (15-ounce) can cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
2 cups small pasta, such as tubetti or elbow macaroni, already cooked
Salt & pepper, to taste
parmesan cheese, optional



Directions:

1. Heat olive oil over medium heat in a large, heavy soup pot.
2. Add the onions, carrots, celery, garlic, thyme and bay leaf cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, for 8 to 10 minutes, until the vegetables begin to soften.
3. Add the tomatoes, 6 cups of the chicken stock/broth or water, sweet potatoes and kale. Bring to a boil, then lower heat and simmer uncovered for 30-35 minutes, until the vegetables are tender.
4. Discard the bay leaf. Add the beans, pasta and cook for an additional 8-10 minutes. Season with salt and pepper and/or sprinkle with parmesan cheese.

Chef Raquel Rivera-Pablo

A Pinch of Salt, LLC

www.apinchofsalt.com

Raquel@apinchofsalt.com



**Bringing Good Food
For All**

Sopa de Camote y Col Rizada

Sirves 4

Chef Raquel se graduó con honores en el programa culinario en el Instituto de Educación Culinaria después de terminar su pasantía en Le Bernardin en Nueva York. En 2009, el chef Raquel creó A Pinch of Salt, LLC ofrece instrucción práctica de cocción se centra en la preparación de sana, alta cocina, sin embargo, las comidas prácticos y de bajo costo. Actualmente, los socios Chef Raquel con el Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport (CCGB) proporcionar una amplia educación de cocina en las despensas de alimentos locales y programas de comidas de la comunidad. Chef Raquel también proporciona la divulgación y la educación para la cocción Bridgeport mercado de los granjeros de colaboración a los 6 mercados de agricultores. Esto se basa en su compromiso previo con Wellness in the Schools, una organización en Nueva York que proporcionar a los estudiantes de escuelas públicas comidas nutritivas que se refuerzan a través de la educación de cocinar en las aulas y la jardinería. Chef Raquel es un apasionado de la educación de los grupos de jóvenes, familias, personas mayores y las comunidades sobre la importancia de la cocina saludable, la comprensión de la información nutricional, que se extiende de dólares de alimentos, la utilización de los mercados agrícolas y jardines de la comunidad.

Ingredientes:

1 cebolla amarilla grande, picada
3 zanahorias, cortadas en ½ pulgadas medias lunas
2 tallos de apio, cortado en finas ½ pulgadas medias lunas
2 dientes de ajo, aplastados
ramitas de tomillo fresco o 1 cdta. tomillo seco y / o 1 cdta. Orégano seco
1 hoja de laurel
1 (26 onzas) de tomates cortados en cubitos bajos en sodio
4 a 6 tazas de caldo de pollo, caldo de pollo bajo en sodio o agua
2 batatas, peladas y en cubitos
8 a 10 oz col rizada, de tallo y lavado
1 (15 onzas) cannellini frijoles, escurridos y enjuagados
2 tazas pequeña de pasta, como Tubetti o macarrones, ya cocido
Sal y pimienta, al gusto
queso parmesano, opcional



Direcciones:

1. Caliente el aceite de oliva a fuego medio en una olla grande y pesada.
2. Agregue la cebolla, las zanahorias, el apio, el ajo, el tomillo y el laurel cocine a fuego medio, revolviendo ocasionalmente, durante 8 a 10 minutos, hasta que las verduras comiencen a ablandarse.
3. Agregue los tomates, 6 tazas de caldo de pollo / caldo o agua, la batata y la col rizada. Llevar a ebullición, luego baje el calor y cocine a fuego lento sin tapar durante 30-35 minutos, hasta que las verduras estén tiernas.
4. Deseche la hoja de laurel. Agregar los frijoles, pasta y cocine durante otros 8-10 minutos. Sazone con sal y pimienta y / o espolvorear con queso parmesano.

Chef Raquel Rivera-Pablo

A Pinch of Salt, LLC

www.apinchofsalt.com

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For All**