How to stay healthy during the holidays

The holiday season is upon us! There will be so much to do over the next few weeks. Don’t let your health fall by the wayside as you prepare for your celebrations. Read on to learn tips to help you eat well, stay active and be healthy throughout the holiday season.

Letting go of perfectionism during the holidays

It’s the most wonderful time of the year, right? But if you’re putting a ton of time and energy into having the perfect holiday, it’s probably not so wonderful. Focusing on perfection instead of simply enjoying the season can put a huge damper on your holiday happiness. Check out our top tips for letting go of perfectionism during the holidays.

“Perfect” is an illusion. The perfect holiday doesn’t really exist! Instead, strive to have the best possible holiday by being grateful for what you have, enjoying the time spent with friends and family, and not worrying too much about what didn’t get done exactly as you wanted.

Set limits. “No” is a word that might feel uncomfortable to say, but it’s an important word during a season jam-packed with commitments and obligations. Choose the most meaningful events and commit to them. It’s okay to politely decline events that aren’t as meaningful to you, or that would take too much time and energy to participate in.

Eat well

• Watch your portions! Whether you’re eating at home or a holiday party, follow this simple rule: make half your plate fruits and vegetables, one quarter protein, and one quarter grains.
• Prevent overindulging by being conscious about your meal choices. Adopt an 80/20 rule or 90/10 rule. Aim to eat healthy foods 80 or 90 percent of the time and less healthy 20 or 10 percent of the time.

Stay active

• Be prepared to exercise outside of your routine. You may not be able to stick to your normal workout regimen with the chaos of the holiday season, but try simple things like parking farther away from stores while shopping, or marching in place during commercial breaks while watching TV.
• Aim to do at least one activity per day. Even if you only have a few minutes to spare, exercising for a short amount of time is better than not exercising at all.

Be healthy

• Wash your hands. The holiday season also marks cold and flu season. Avoid getting sick by washing your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water.
• Travel safely. If you’re hitting the road for holiday celebrations, be sure to wear your seat belt, avoid drinking and driving (or getting a ride from someone who may have been drinking), and watch the weather and plan accordingly so that you travel safely.

Scale back. If your holiday celebrations feel like just a little too much, consider scaling back. For example, why not have a Pollyanna where each person buys a nice gift for one person, instead of each member of the family buying for all the other family members? This can help reduce stress and financial worries.

Practice acceptance. Know going into the holidays that not everything is likely to work out exactly as you planned them. Accepting this truth can help take the pressure off, allowing you to enjoy your holiday—the delicious foods, the special events, and the time spent with people you love—instead of focusing on things that went wrong.
Have a **mindful holiday**

The holiday gatherings, gift buying, decorating and flurry of other seasonal activities can leave you feeling drained of any drop of jolliness—and perhaps even a bit blue. By using the basic principles of mindfulness—which is about staying grounded, aware and focused on the moment—you can avoid feeling overwhelmed, enabling you to reconnect with the joys that this season can bring. Sitting and meditating or focusing on slow, deep breathing are just two notable ways to achieve mindfulness. Here are other ways:

**Tune in to what matters.** Mindfulness is not just about living life more fully, but gaining more insight about how you want to live your life. This goes for holidays, too. Focus on what gives you meaning and/or makes you happy and give up what makes you stressed.

**Scratch multitasking off your list.** Focusing on doing one thing fully at a time can help loosen the grip of anxious thoughts and help you feel more balanced. For practice, take an orange and peel it very slowly. Feel the pebbly surface, smell the pungent fragrance, and taste the tangy juiciness. Bring your full attention to whatever you are doing at the moment, whether stringing lights or sitting in a year-end staff meeting.

**Tap into the small moments of joy.** It may not come from hosting the perfect holiday spread or finding the exact right gift. Just seeing the winter moon shining through the trees can bring delight once you become more aware of experiencing the moment.

**Learn to say, “hmmm, that’s interesting.”** Things not going exactly as you hoped? Heated discussions at a family get-together? Instead of reacting and letting anxiety, worry or anger take over, learn to just observe what you’re feeling.

**Can’t shake the holiday blues?** Be sure to talk to your doctor or other healthcare provider for help.

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**Safe Toys and Gifts Month**

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Find out more: [https://bit.ly/2zIFJrU](https://bit.ly/2zIFJrU)

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