

10 TIPS FOR A HEALTHY HOLIDAY

by Wendy Lewis, AtomicKickboxing.com Spokesmodel

The holidays are a festive but risky season. If you're not careful, you could easily receive an unwanted gift of extra pounds and inches. This year, navigate family gatherings, office parties, gift shopping and more with these helpful tips from Burke's Martial Arts in Cranston.

1. STOCK YOUR SLEIGH.

Mall food and sugary snacks will leave you more stuffed than a stocking. To avoid hunger during errand runs and gift shopping, pack your car or purse with healthy snacks. Healthy options: a piece of fruit, unsalted nuts and raisins, or low-fat string cheese.

2. MAKE A MERRY MOVE.

Don't neglect exercise—it helps fight weight gain. Plus, it's one of the best ways to relieve the stress of the season. Stuck inside? Challenge family members young and old to a pushup or sit-up contest, or just put on some music and rock around the Christmas tree. You'll all get the gift of great memories and probably some funny photos!

3. WALK IN A WINTER WATERLAND.

When you dash about, don't forget your water bottle, and drink water before a holiday meal to help avoid overeating. Staying

well-hydrated also helps keep mucous membranes moist and better able to filter airborne viruses.

4. LET VISIONS OF SUGARPLUMS DANCE IN YOUR HEAD.

Sacrificing sleep can make you feel like you've been run over by a reindeer. A study in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* found that people who slept at least eight hours a night were about three times less likely to catch a cold than those who slept for less than seven.

5. HAVE A CUP OF CHEER—IN MODERATION.

Many alcoholic drinks contain lots of sugar and empty calories. Plus, too many can inhibit the good judgment you need to make healthy eating choices. At parties, try alternating no more than two drinks with water and avoiding fat bombs (like eggnog) altogether.

6. DON'T SPIN THE CALORIE DREIDEL AT THE OFFICE.

Free treats from co-workers can mean pounds you'll pay for later. Setting limits beforehand (such as one cookie or two small chocolates per day) makes it easier to say no in the moment of temptation.

7. PUT "LOW-FAT" ON YOUR LIST.

Volunteer to bring a healthy dish to a gathering, like a fruit appetizer or steamed vegetables. Chances are other guests like you will appreciate having at least one guilt-free item on the table.

8. LEAVE THE LEFTOVERS.

High-calorie take-homes are as welcome as ugly holiday sweaters. Decline your host's offers of desserts and food, or freeze them in small portions as soon as you get home for planned indulgences.

9. BE NICE, AND A LITTLE NAUGHTY.

Allow yourself a few guilt-free holiday splurges. Small indulgences will help you avoid the binges that are more likely when you feel like a food-deprived Scrooge.

10. ENLIST A SELF-HELP ELF.

The buddy system is one of the most effective ways to meet health and fitness goals any time of year.

Make a pact with a friend or coworker to make healthy eating choices, share a lunchtime walk, or attend a fitness class regularly throughout December. You're showing the spirit of giving by helping someone else, and you just might start a lifelong healthy habit!

Need help staying on track? AtomicKickboxing.com offers a variety of classes and customized personal fitness training to help you reach your health and fitness goals through the new year and beyond. Gift yourself or someone else this holiday with a membership or gift certificate. Visit AtomicKickboxing.com or call 401-523-1008.



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