

5 Ways to Have a Healthy Holiday Season

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The holiday season is notoriously a time for overindulgence, but that doesn't mean you have to abandon your health and wellness journey along the way. With a few tweaks to your holiday routine, you can enjoy the holidays and gatherings with your friends and family without sacrificing much. Try these five tips for enjoying the holidays without falling off the wellness wagon below.

Go easy on the booze

Especially if you're going to be at home all day, watch out when it comes to alcohol. Alcohol is full of empty calories with no nutritional value at seven calories per gram, with a unit of alcohol weighing 8 grams.

Worse, these calories from alcohol cannot simply be 'burnt off.' As they cannot be used by your muscles, the calories from alcohol enter your bloodstream directly instead, where they have to be metabolized before the body can use its preferred sources of energy like carbohydrates or fat.



able way to reduce your

alcohol intake is to alternate alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks, giving you the best of both worlds.

You can also limit yourself to a certain number or type of drinks, such as a single glass of red wine with a meal rather than a six-pack of beer while watching the game.

Don't gorge yourself

Eating a giant Christmas dinner contributes to weight gain, indigestion and heartburn. It also causes lethargy, meaning you're not likely to burn off the thousands of calories you've just consumed.

Rather than indulging in a massive single feast, try eating a normal meal and then taking a 20-minute break, which will give the brain enough time to register that your stomach is full. If



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you are still hungry after your digestive break, it's okay to eat more, but the odds are good you'll realize you've had enough.

Maintain a healthy immune system

Maintaining a healthy immune system may seem like it's easier said than done, but there are a few quick and actionable ways to make sure you're operating at your best.

"Make sure you are dressed appropriately for the change in weather as your body does not like drastic changes- so pull out those hats, scarves and socks," says Stella Badalova, Director of Healthcare Relations and Clinical Development at Medly Pharmacy.

Other ways to keep your immune system in tip-top shape include eating a healthy diet, getting at least eight hours of sleep (which we discuss below), and smoking less -- or cutting out smoking entirely.

Of course, sometimes no matter what we do, we can feel a little under the weather. “If you feel that you’re getting sick use an immune-boosting product such as Emergen-C, Cold-Eeze, Sambucol, and Airborne to name a few,” Badalova advises. These products will not eliminate your cold, but may shorten the duration of it by a day or so.

Avoid stress

The holiday season can be full of unexpected stressors around everything from food to family, so it’s important to take care of your mental health and avoid stress as much as you can.

One way to keep yourself free of stress is through the use of music, which

benefits our physical and mental health. According to research, music can reduce stress, lift moods, and help the brain’s cortex to produce faster beta waves, better equipping us to concentrate on lengthy or tedious tasks.

If the holidays have you feeling anxious about how much you need to accomplish, or if you are exhausted from trying to do too much, pump up



via Unsplash

the volume on some of your favorite tunes.



sleep and reaching out to
to call and connect,

ensuring that you'll have enough time for a meaningful conversation. You may even choose to volunteer in your community; working for the benefit of others can often reflect back upon ourselves in the best of ways.

As for sleep, at least eight hours of sleep is the right amount for most people and is a key part of a healthy lifestyle that benefits your mind along with your body. Sleep is involved in the healing and repair of your heart and blood vessels, while lack of sleep may make those long cross-country drives very difficult, as lack of sleep often brings on dulled reflexes, errors in judgment and sheer grouchiness. That's not what you want -- especially during the holiday season.

Set reasonable goals

"New year, new me." Sound familiar? The New Year is for many of us a time to reflect on the year that has gone past and set goals for the year to come. However, you may be causing yourself more stress than it's worth by setting unreasonable goals. The stress of trying to keep to such a goal may cause you to have a less healthy holiday season than you're hoping for, so here are a few quick goal-setting tips for your New Year's resolutions.

- **Keep goals realistic:** That means if you want to have a body like Schwarzenegger in his prime, it's probably not going to happen. But if you just want to make sure you go to the gym on a regular basis, that's much more likely. Take into account where you are in your life and what resources you have access to.
- **Keep goals actionable and specific:** "Improve your health" is a vague goal that could mean anything. What about "hit the gym three times a week" instead? By phrasing your goal in this fashion, it is easy to see what concrete steps you need to take in order to perform well on your resolution.
- **Don't make too many goals:** You want to look better, feel better, make more money, travel, learn a new skill, learn a new language, learn a new craft, treat yourself and others better... There's no need to do all of this in the same year. Pick one, set realistic and actionable steps to achieve it, and find an improved you at the end of the year, ready to make great new resolutions one more time.

Don't let the holidays get you down and don't let your wellness journey get derailed. By taking care of



ust like you do for the rest of
sure to include time for self-

care throughout the holidays to keep you thriving, healthy and well.



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