

5 Tips to a Healthy Holiday Season

There's not nothing like the holidays to bring out the worst in our old habits and attitudes about food, encouraging us to reach back and touch the warmest memories of Christmases past. As youngsters, the holidays for most of us were filled with happy moments, and these moments often revolved around the sight, smell and eating of traditional foods. Now as adults, our memory bucket is stirred when Christmas fills the air. It's no wonder that the holidays are like mini-vacations from wise, reasonable eating—a time to let go! Sadly, this “time off” from a healthy lifestyle leaves us even more fatigued and vulnerable to emotional stress. It also lowers our immune shields, opening up the door to holiday sickness.

Let these holidays make a difference. Use these tips to help your choices be naturally better!

#1

Don't starve yourself. One of the biggest holiday mistakes you can make is to starve yourself the day of a big party or dinner, “saving up” calories. It throws off your metabolism and sets you up for binge-like eating. Instead, maintain your small, evenly spaced meals throughout the day, which will keep your metabolism and appetite in better control. Be sure to always eat a healthy snack before going to parties or open houses so that you can maintain control over your appetite. You can choose judiciously when you don't arrive famished.

#2

“Just say no!” This has been a powerful campaign slogan warning children and teens against drug use. The irony of such a campaign is that we adults can’t even say no to a cookie! Peer pressure didn’t die in high school. No matter what your age, you must learn—and remember—to say that one simple word that tends to get stuck in the human throat: No. When you’re offered a food that doesn’t fit into your wellness plan, there’s no need to give reasons for your action; neither is there a need to feel guilty. Simply say, “I don’t care for any, thank you.” Those words communicate strength and decisiveness and make a positive confession. The truth is, you can eat anything; there are just some foods that you choose not to eat. A caring friend will respect your desires and will understand a simple “No, thank you” as long as you don’t enter into a lecture on why they shouldn’t be eating it either! Try not to look pitiful in a corner, no one ever notices that the life of the party isn’t eating.

#3

Avoid the “I’ve-blown-it-now” syndrome. Be assured that your health will never be ruined by one extravagant meal, a piece of fruitcake or several Christmas cookies. It is not the “big parties,” but your day-to-day eating that counts. A lapse in your healthy lifestyle is just that, a lapse. Do not let it become a relapse, another relapse and finally a collapse. This is the “I’ve-blown-it-now” syndrome in a nutshell. Avoid this syndrome by looking at each meal and snack as an event. Don’t look at your poor eating habits as one bad day (“I’ll get back to healthy eating tomorrow”) or one unhealthy weekend (“I’ll get back on track on Monday”) or worse yet, a whole holiday season (“I’ll get back to my ‘diet’ on January 2”). Also, fight rushing to the scale to see the consequences of a hearty

dinner and rich dessert. Refined sugars and sodium can make you retain water. And when you eat more than usual, the effect of both is increased, causing you to retain as much as two to three pounds. As long as you return to your normal eating and exercise habits and drink lots of water, most of the extra pounds will disappear in a day or so.

#4

Stress the stress-busters! We all know that this is a busy, stress-filled time of year. It couldn't be a more critical time to have the physical armament against stress in place so that you can feel your best. Eat smaller amounts of food every two to three hours to keep energy, moods and appetite control at a higher level. Carve out time for daily exercise, even if it's just a short, brisk walk. Exercise is the body's sword against stress, literally cutting away at its effect. It can be your quiet time in the midst of a busy day, when you can divert and reflect on Who your source of strength really is and that nothing is worth being robbed of the good news

#5

Celebrate Jesus! There's no need to set up holiday sugar plums as "forbidden fruit," just let your celebrations be centered on traditions beyond sweet treats. This may include making ornaments or presents for loved ones, singing carols or sharing the Christmas story with loved ones. It is expressing that you know the "reason for the season." Build new traditions that will focus on more than just food.

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