

Holiday Survival Guide

1. Balance is important. Some people get to the holidays and forget all sense of balance with the busyness that comes. Balance and times of peace and rest are crucial for the healing aspects of your immune system as well as the digestive system. Make sure you carve out moments to relax each day.
2. Sleep. With increased demands, many make up time by not getting adequate sleep. This compromises your immune system, leaving you more susceptible to illness. In addition, it often creates more sugar/carb cravings, and many also use more substances like caffeine to function - all which will compromise your health further. Lack of sleep can lead to mood disorders, which are already heightened due to lack of sun and stress of this time of year. So - make sleep a priority! 7-9 hours a night.
3. Movement. Movement is also a critical factor in health and healing. It does not have to be long, stressful workouts. In fact, we have found that something like the 7 minute workout 1-2 times daily is effective. We can all find 7-14 minutes a day to move and get our heart rate going. Make it a priority to find this time.
4. Fresh Air. Try to get some fresh air daily and sunlight if able. Even brief times outside can be refreshing and help our bodies and minds. If you are unable to get out, don't forget to open windows briefly each day to circulate fresh air (indoor air is known to have many toxins).
5. Stress management. Despite all our best efforts, we will likely feel some stress over the holidays. Utilize various techniques to make sure the stress is not negatively affecting your body. Breathing, meditation and prayer, baths, walks, etc. should be utilized. Practicing these now is helpful. That way when it comes to stressful times - we are more likely to do them if they come easy to us. Otherwise, we may turn to other coping mechanisms like food and alcohol (all too abundant at this time of year). Remember - you can say no to things that will only add stress.
6. Minimalism. The holidays naturally lend to an overabundance of "things". Many who have embraced minimalism are able to enjoy things like the

Holidays more because there are less distractions with "stuff" and it is less stressful. Instead of feeling busy having to buy a lot of presents (which can cause financial stress) - give gifts that will mean more in the future.

Something homemade, time with you, an outing together, etc. There are many lists available on line of gifts that are not "bought". In addition, how can you simplify the holidays to make it more meaningful and enjoyable - allowing more time to be with the people around you?

7. Mood disorders. Many people naturally feel more depressed and have more difficulty regulating moods around the holidays. This is due to many factors including lack of sun and fresh air, low Vit D, stress of the holidays, and sometimes family issues during this time. Supporting your mood with various supplements or even medications during this time can be helpful. Using light boxes for those with SAD is also recommended. It is important to get on top of deteriorating moods - as this often naturally contributes to poor health habits (poor sleep, poor food choices, not exercising, difficulty with gratefulness, etc...). There are great supplements to help support this without the side effects of medicines. So please consider addressing this if needed! It is important to your overall health!
8. Limit alcohol. If you tolerate alcohol, a little at times can be okay. However, too much alcohol is disruptive to good sleep. In addition, if you have any neuroinflammation (brain inflammation with symptoms such as depression, lack of motivation, brain fog, brain fatigue, dizziness or others) - you should avoid alcohol. Find some non-alcoholic drinks that you enjoy as your Holiday treats instead.
9. Supplementation. Most people will need Vitamin D in the winter. It is crucial as we head into influenza season (in addition to COVID) to have adequate vitamin D status. Zinc, vitamin C, and fish oils can also be beneficial to the immune system. Lastly, supporting gut health through food and supplements can also benefit the immune system. For more information on other specific supplements tailored to COVID - see the protocol.
10. Remember the reason for the holidays. Don't forget it is about celebration, family, service, memories and more. It is not about perfection or gifts. Health is important to enable you to make the most of this precious time.

Food is Medicine

There is often concern of the impact of the holiday on health. This has never been more true than the present - with the impending influenza season on top of COVID, election stress, 2020 stress and more. With a tendency to indulge more and exercise less, as well as increased stress, the average person gains 1-5 pounds, damages the gut and immune system, has a spike in blood sugars and cholesterol, which all increase risk of illness.

However, with the right strategies and planning, you can stay healthy and celebrate the holidays. Here are some tips to help.

- Pre-eat. Before you go to places away from home that will involve food, eat something healthy so you do not arrive hungry. Arriving hungry can lead to over-eating and poor food choices. Then you can choose to enjoy some foods you may not generally eat at home, or if you are on a stricter food plan you can graze the healthier items available.
- Portion size. If you are at a buffet type gathering, take small portions. You can always return, but you are less likely to overeat if you start with and continue to take small portions.
- Fiber, protein, fat. Stabilize your blood sugars, feel better and manage carb cravings by eating plenty of protein, fiber and fat with any food. Fill your plate with the vegetables and fruits, as well as nuts or other good fats. Then you can allow small portions of other higher carb foods
- If you have trouble with willpower at events when it comes to food, arrive a little later after the food has been served. Spend time in rooms away from the food if possible. Make plans on what you will do if you feel like you are starting to overeat.
- Bring your own treat. If you feel you may be too tempted by rich desserts or other foods you are trying to avoid, bring your own healthier version. Then you will have something you know you enjoy, but it won't set you off on an unwanted path.

- Eat mindfully. Slowly savor your food, especially the indulgences. The more you can truly enjoy the experience, the less need for repeating it immediately. Enjoy those you are with, and savor the entire experience.
- Choose indulgences wisely. If you are ready to treat yourself, pick one treat and truly enjoy it (no guilt allowed). Then if you are still hungry, move on to other healthier items until you are fully satisfied.
- Consider a food diary. One of the best ways to stay on track is to journal your foods. It does not have to be precise or calorie counting (not trying to add more tasks to your list). Just a journal of foods you eat over the holiday weeks. Then you can look at the daily intake and know if you can then have an indulgence soon, or if you need to improve and buckle down for a few days.
- Find support. Having the support of others on the same health conscious pathway can be very helpful! From sharing healthier recipes, to holding each other accountable, planning, and more. Surrounding yourself with others making healthy choices can go a long way in keeping you on track.
- Make smart swaps. If you are able to prepare some of the foods and treats yourself, you can swap out certain ingredients to make some foods healthier. You can make certain recipes gluten free or dairy free. You can use better sweeteners and healthier desserts.
- Holiday drinks can add a lot of sugar, bad fat, food colorings, and alcohol to your diet. This is a great place to cut back and stick to better beverages like fruit-infused water, sparkling water, teas, or even Zevia. There are also healthier versions of various drinks like hot chocolate. I encourage you to look at your favorite drinks and try to find a healthier alternative.
- Prepare now. Start looking up healthier recipes and alternatives to food as the focus for different activities this holiday season. If you can find some tried and true recipes before the holidays - that will simplify things for you significantly.
- If you are traveling, or staying somewhere, consider packing an emergency food kit. One of the quickest ways to throw off healthy eating is to be traveling and not have options. You could consider including the following items (or similar):

- a. Trail mix (various nuts)
 - b. Grass fed jerky
 - c. Cut up vegetables with hummus or guacamole for dip
 - d. Hard-boiled eggs
 - e. Healthy whole food protein bar
 - f. Protein shakes, fruits and greens
 - g. Fruits (balanced with protein like nuts)
- If you have moments, meals or even days of poor food and lifestyle choices, consider adding in extra antioxidants to help balance out the free radicals created by poor food, lack of sleep, stress and more. These can include vitamins, glutathione and NAC, Resveratrol, Green tea, ALA, oncoplex, and more.
 - If you are consuming more salt, consider potassium supplementation to decrease the inflammation associated with high salt intake. K-bicarbonate is available in the supplement store. Recommended 1000-2000mg with a salty meal (for those sensitive to salt, hypertension, thyroid and AI disease).

True joy and contentment will come from feeling good and honoring your commitment to your health and loved ones. Remind yourself that this is far more important than tempting foods. Always ask yourself if this food is truly worth it? Good health feels good; blood sugar highs and lows, as well as food reactions, autoimmune and neuroimmune flares do not.

"Living a life in which you get to call the shots and author your story is the ultimate way not to simply survive, but to flourish. Make this holiday season the best by realizing your strength to live intentionally with regard for how each choice you make reflects on your complete health and wellbeing."

Excerpt above from Dr. Mark Hyman

Blessings this holiday and Christmas season!