

Stay Healthy  
FOR THE **HOLIDAYS**



# Remaining Fit Through it All

Between the special snacks, the hearty meals and the fun parties, the holidays can be the most difficult time to stay healthy.

Just fitting in a trip to the gym is difficult with such a busy schedule. Weather plays a factor this time of year. So why not try out some of the new virtual fitness options? They'll give you the opportunity to exercise on a personal timetable. You can more easily keep up with your own special regimen even when you're traveling to see friends and family.

## ONLINE WORKOUTS

Staying fit has evolved beyond a traditional gym environment. Virtual fitness classes transformed the wellness sector by offering diverse exercise options and everyday accessibility through the internet. They're particularly helpful during the holiday season, when schedules may be tight and outdoor conditions take a turn for the worse. Online platforms now offer a broad range of classes, including cardio, yoga, strength training and dance. You'll have a chance to participate in live sessions, but you can also take part in pre-recorded workouts at your convenience. Some classes this time of year may even celebrate the holiday



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spirit by incorporating related music or themes.

## HOLIDAY-THEMED EXERCISES

Amid the hustle and bustle of the holidays, yoga offers a quiet space to be mindful while improving our health. You can celebrate the joy of the season by integrating holiday-themed yoga into your

fitness regimen. Try your own poses and sequences inspired by festive symbols or visit online sites to discover holiday-themed practices, including breathing exercises and various flow sequences. Outside of a structured yoga class, consider incorporating meditation and deep breathing exercises to foster a sense of calmness and gratitude

amid the holiday rush.

## NEW TRADITIONS

Establish new, health-conscious traditions with festive fitness challenges. One option is an advent calendar run, where you'll take part in 12 runs leading up to Christmas. The Santa Race involves a series of runs that add up to the equivalent distance from

the North Pole to your home. Other holiday-themed fitness activities might include doing sit-ups while decorating lower branches of the tree. Put on a favorite holiday playlist, and have everyone do a selected exercise each time a pre-selected word is sung. Friends and family can also do an exercise for every present they open.



# Holiday Hydration

‘Tis the season for overindulging, so keep your body’s water requirements in mind.

Whether it’s sweet and salty treats or a festive cocktail, the tendency is to eat, drink and be just a little merrier this time of year. As you navigate through the season, keep healthy hydration in mind.

## WHY IT’S SO IMPORTANT

You’ve probably heard the common recommendation to drink at least eight glasses of water every day, but you might not know the rationale behind it all. Water plays a vital role in transporting nutrients and oxygen to blood cells, supporting healthy organ function, regulating body temperature, maintaining your energy levels, lubricating joints and eliminating waste products from your systems. Drinking 20 ounces of water 20 minutes before a meal doesn’t just maintain your hydration. It can help with caloric intake and reduce cravings.

## NOT JUST WATER

A happy and healthy lifestyle depends on these essential functions, so make sure you get an adequate amount of fluids. Obviously, pure water is the best source for what your body needs. But it’s not the only pathway to healthy hydration. You can stay on track this holiday season by drinking seltzers,

sugar-free flavored water, teas, coffee and sparkling options to reach the recommended daily amount of fluid.

## TIPS FOR YOUR HEALTH

The best way to make sure you’re drinking throughout the day is to have a refillable water bottle on hand. Focus on replacing sugary beverages with water or other healthier options. When dining out, opt for water. You’ll be staying hydrated while saving money. At home, serve water with your meals to encourage consumption by everyone. Enhance the flavor of your water by adding an appealing wedge of lime or lemon. It’ll encourage you to drink more.

## GETTING ENOUGH?

So, the recommended intake is eight to twelve cups of water per day. But who can keep up with the precise numbers during this busy season? Instead, listen to your body: Drink more water if you feel thirsty. Pay close attention to your urine. It should be very pale and odorless after your initial trip to the restroom after waking up. Signs of dehydration can include dry mouth, decreased appetite, fatigue and constipation. More severe symptoms may involve dizziness, low blood pressure, confusion and elevated body temperature.





# Staying in the Moment

This year, let's focus on present-moment awareness and gratitude.

During the holiday season, it is all too easy to become overwhelmed by the demands of food preparation, gift-buying and related festivities. A mindfulness advent calendar can help improve your overall well-being during this fun but busy time. Here's how to establish a healthier daily practice:

## BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

Research indicates that mindfulness plays a vital role in promoting overall better health. Evidence suggests that it can effectively reduce anxiety and depression, improve sleep quality, lower blood pressure and aid in managing pain.

Mindfulness in and of itself encourages the development of healthier habits, because you're paying closer attention to your mind and body. Create an intentional focus on the present moment without judgment, while trying to remain fully aware of your thoughts, feelings and everything that surrounds you.

In time, you'll find that these practices help alleviate stress, enhance your emotional well-being and nurture a more profound sense of gratitude. This is especially valuable during the holidays, when everyone wants to savor



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the joys and blessings while letting go of the season's inevitable stress.

## CREATING A CALENDAR

Start by setting up a structured daily practice that helps you remain in the moment during the holiday routine. A mindfulness advent calendar should span 24 or 25 days, starting on December 1 and

culminating on Christmas Day. To gather inspiration, conduct an internet image search on the topic. Look for creative designs and idea-generating activities. You can purchase cards that offer holiday-themed mindfulness activities, or write your own unique practices and place them in a jar for daily selection throughout the season.

## DAILY ACTIVITIES

Leave aside a few moments each day for a designated mindfulness practice or challenge. This may include guided meditations, journaling reflections focused on gratitude, mindful breathing exercises, performing acts of kindness, or simply savoring the season's delights. Even a moment of admiration for the world's natural beauty or

a simple cup of tea can become an opportunity for reflection. Try to fully experience the taste of holiday treats while appreciating the elegance of everyone's seasonal decorations. Take a moment to connect with a loved one and give them your undivided attention. Volunteer for a charitable cause to share a sense of love and community during this festive season.



# Holiday Fire and Safety Tips

Every winter sees a spike in home fires and accidents. Don't become the next victim.

You've pulled out the holiday decorations to spread joy both indoors and outdoors. But the risk of tragedy lurks in everyday places, whether from falling off ladders, a frayed holiday light cord that ignites, or the tripping hazard from decorations and cords. Excited small children or pets may inadvertently knock over trees or other decor. Keep your home safe this season with these helpful tips:

## FIRE SAFETY

On average, candles result in 20 home fires per day in the United States – and December is the peak month. Opt for battery-operated candles. Make sure open flames are kept away from flammable materials and out of reach of pets and children. Never leave a candle unattended. Inspect your holiday light cords for any signs of fraying or damage before hanging them.

Limit the number of light strands to a maximum of three per extension cord. Turn off all holiday lights when going to bed or leaving the house.

When securing lights, avoid using nails on electrical cords. Use heavy-duty extension cords when setting up outdoor decorations.

## HOLIDAY SAFETY

Remove stockings and any hanging mantel decorations before lighting the fireplace. Only use lights designed for outdoor use in the yard. Look for fire-resistant labels when purchasing artificial trees and position them away from sources of heat like fireplaces and radiators. Keep your live

tree well-watered since a dried-out tree is a fire hazard. Conduct regular tests of your smoke alarms and implement a home fire escape plan. (The goal is for all family members to safely exit the house within two minutes.)

Always read the instructions for decorative items. Make sure every socket in a

light cord contains a bulb and discard damaged strands. Keep ladders and outdoor decorations a safe distance from power lines. Ensure the ladder is stable, use footwear with good traction, and enlist a partner to assist while you are on the ladder. If you have pets or children, or if they will be visiting, buy

unbreakable ornaments instead of fragile ceramic or glass varieties. Avoid displaying artificial food items, especially candies or fruits, that may tempt children or pets. Be cautious with festive plants such as poinsettias, holly berries and mistletoe berries since they can be toxic if ingested.



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# Maintain Good Sleep Habits

Getting enough shut-eye can be particularly challenging during this busy season.

With so many holiday-related activities planned, you'll have to focus on sleep. It's crucial in order to fully embrace the joys of the season, but you also need adequate rest to maintain optimal health. Among the health issues connected with insufficient sleep are heart attack, stroke, coronary artery disease, asthma, cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, arthritis, chronic kidney disease, depression and diabetes.

Sleep requirements vary among different age groups: Newborns require between 14 to 17 hours of sleep. School-age children need approximately 9 to 12 hours, while teenagers typically need 8 to 10 hours. Adults should aim for at least 7 hours per night.

## FOSTERING BETTER HABITS

Be consistent. Aim to go to bed and wake up at the same times each day, even on weekends. Create an ideal sleep environment. Keep your bedroom slightly cooler for optimal comfort. Unplug the electronics. Turn off devices like smartphones, computers and televisions in your sleeping area. Monitor your diet. Avoid large meals, caffeine and alcohol close to bedtime to promote better sleep



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quality. Stay active this holiday season. Regular physical activity throughout the day can improve your ability to sleep at night.

If you're still having trouble sleeping, avoid napping. If you feel drowsy, keep your naps as brief as possible and schedule them for early afternoon to avoid disrupting your nightly sleep routine. Don't try

to force yourself to sleep. If you find yourself awake for more than 20 minutes, get up and stretch, read or engage in some other calming activity in low light before attempting to sleep again. Minimize light exposure by using an eye mask or blackout curtains.

## SLEEP DISORDERS

Sometimes getting a restful

night over the holidays simply comes down to embracing comfort, perhaps with cozy new sheets or pajamas. If these proven strategies prove ineffective, you may be experiencing a sleep disorder. Common issues include insomnia, restless leg syndrome, narcolepsy and sleep apnea.

Maintain a sleep diary for

10 days and share it with your healthcare provider. Templates for sleep diaries are available online. You'll be documenting your bedtime, wake times, sleep duration, exercise habits, any naps, and intake of caffeine, medications or alcohol. New sleep-tracking apps can assist in monitoring sleep patterns and the quality of your sleep.



# Before Your Holiday Trip

If you're traveling this season, keep your health and well-being in mind.

Modern transportation gets us where we're going faster than ever, whether you're traveling by personal vehicle, plane or train. This allows friends and family to gather annually for the holidays despite living in far-flung places. But there are potential health impacts to consider, from common illnesses like cold and flu to jet lag. Luckily, you can help protect yourself.

## PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

Focus on strengthening your immune system prior to and throughout your holiday travel to maintain good health. Begin by eating a balanced diet, getting sufficient sleep and staying well-hydrated in the days leading up to your trip. Consider adding immune-boosting foods and supplements like vitamin C and zinc to your daily routine. Practice good hygiene by frequently washing your hands, avoiding close contact with those who are unwell and using hand sanitizers. As your immune defenses are bolstered, you're reducing the risk of falling ill.

## YOUR LONG HOLIDAY FLIGHT

Traveling across multiple time zones can disrupt your sleep patterns, resulting in



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potentially holiday-ruining fatigue.

To address jet lag, gradually adjust your sleep schedule a few days prior to your trip so you can arrive already aligned with your destination's time zone. During your flight, stay well hydrated, try to rest or sleep according to the local time of your arrival, and limit your intake of caffeine and

alcohol. Upon reaching your destination, focus on exposure to natural sunlight since that will aid in resetting your internal clock. If you're still struggling to stay awake during the holiday fun, consult a medical professional for tailored strategies or consider over-the-counter melatonin to more effectively manage jet lag.

## FOCUS ON SAYING ACTIVE

Regular exercise boosts energy levels, improves blood circulation and promotes overall well-being. Unfortunately, travel often necessitates extended periods of sitting, whether in planes, vehicles or trains. To counteract these sedentary aspects of travel, include some planned

physical activity in your itinerary. Take advantage of any breaks during the journey to stretch and walk around, if it's feasible. When flying, you can perform simple exercises while seated like shoulder rolls and leg stretches. Once you arrive at your holiday destination, don't forget to schedule physical activities like walking, yoga or hiking.



# Dealing with Grief

The holidays can take on a different feel when you're attempting to move forward without a loved one.

Dealing with loss and grief is never easy, but it can be even more difficult during the holidays. The first year without a loved one is typically the most difficult of them all. Here are some helpful strategies for coping during a season when everyone else is so festive.

## GO AT YOUR OWN PACE

Carefully consider which holiday gatherings, parties and events to attend. Some people who are grieving may choose not to celebrate the holidays at all, while others might find solace in maintaining their traditional routines as a meaningful way to honor their loved one. It can be beneficial to create special moments of remembrance, and this can be done either individually or with friends and family. Sharing photographs and reflecting on cherished memories can provide support and strengthen connections among those who've been left behind.

## THERE'S NO RIGHT ANSWER

Recognize that everyone mourns differently. Family dynamics can sometimes be strained by differing expectations surrounding grief, so try to approach these



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conversations with as much sensitivity as possible. Open dialogue about what is best for you and your loved ones can help everyone align their needs while creating a supportive environment during a challenging time for everyone.

## ESTABLISH A ROUTINE

Maintaining some sort of routine helps. Of course, it's

common during the holidays for usual schedules to be disrupted, but in this instance, it could lead to neglecting self-care. Try to remain on a consistent pattern for meals, exercise and sleep. This may seem minor, but neglecting any of them can significantly affect your well-being when you're already struggling with grief. Consider avoiding

holiday movies, where cheerful family portrayals might be overwhelming during times of personal loss. Exercise moderation with alcohol consumption.

## REACH OUT FOR SUPPORT

Don't be afraid to rely on others for support. Whether you contact a friend, family

member or a professional counselor, one meaningful way to honor the memory of a loved one who has passed is to reminisce and share joyful stories. By exchanging humorous anecdotes or heartfelt memories, you can help the healing process while reinforcing and developing new connections with those still present in your life.