

# Stay Fit During the Holidays



## CHALLENGE

Exercise and eat healthy foods this holiday season.

### Requirements to Complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Keep a written record of the days you exercise for at least 30 minutes and make smart meal choices. Record this on your Health Challenge Calendar.
2. Read "Happy, healthy holidays" and "Eat right."
3. To complete the Challenge, eat healthful meals and be physically active for a minimum of 30 minutes daily on at least 22 days this month.
4. Keep records of your completed Challenge in case your organization requires documentation.

### *Happy, healthy holidays!*

It might be challenging to set aside time each day for physical activity and healthful meals. But these things are important for health. Whether your holidays are calm and bright or a blur of activity, one of your priorities should be to keep them healthy. It's important to focus on your personal health all year round.

During the holiday season, people tend to consume more calories and exercise less. With balance and moderation you can enjoy the holidays in a healthy way.

### Exercise

Thanksgiving often begins a 5-week marathon of holiday shopping, parties, and missed workouts culminating with a resolution to get back on the treadmill in the new year. But any time of the year, it's important to:

- ◆ Be physically active at least 30 minutes a day, on at least 5 days each week.
- ◆ Do strength-building activities (e.g., crunches and push-ups) at least twice a week.

- ◆ Do stretching to keep your major joints flexible (neck, shoulders, back, hips, and legs) on at least 2 or 3 days each week. For maximum flexibility, stretch daily.

Here are some ideas to keep you exercising:

- ◆ If you find it difficult to squeeze in 30 continuous minutes, then divide the exercise into 10- or 15-minute segments.
- ◆ Take public transportation to downtown shops. Walk or bike to the bus or train stop.
- ◆ When driving, park in the space that is farthest from the store.
- ◆ Walk briskly between shops.
- ◆ Walk on a treadmill or do jumping jacks while the fruitcake or other holiday treat is baking.
- ◆ When watching holiday specials on television, do push-ups and crunches during commercial breaks.
- ◆ Rather than sitting around the table talking about holiday plans, brainstorm with your family or friends while you walk briskly around the neighborhood.



- ◆ Plan parties that are activity-oriented. Cold weather ideas include: sledding, snow shoeing, and ice skating. Seasonal ideas include: caroling and walking through decorated neighborhoods. For something a little out of the ordinary, host a pool party at your local aquatic center (Santa hats optional).

### Eat right

Food is an important part of the holiday season. Whether your taste runs to old standbys or to something new, it's easy for normal eating patterns to take a backseat at this time of year. By following a few tips on holiday eating, you and your family can enjoy special foods while keeping a balanced and healthy diet.

- ◆ Alcohol has a lot of calories. So do eggnog, punch, and soft drinks. Drink water instead. If you can't resist, alternate your favorite traditional drink with a glass of water. If you drink, the recommended maximum is one alcoholic drink a day for women; for men it's two drinks a day. Of course, if you're the designated driver, steer clear of alcohol completely.

- ◆ If you're hosting a holiday party, provide healthy snacks. Serve salsa with whole-grain, trans-fat-free chips or pita wedges. Offer guacamole with fresh vegetables.
- ◆ If you are a guest, offer to bring a dish to share – and then make sure you bring something healthy. Suggestions include: naturally delicious sweet potatoes drizzled with orange juice and sprinkled with cinnamon; thinly sliced carrots layered with onions and celery seed and baked until soft; a colorful fruit salad.
- ◆ Cook stuffing outside of the turkey – it'll have fewer calories.
- ◆ Eat smaller portions of food. This is especially important at a buffet, where you may want to try everything. Choose the items you want to try the most, and eat a small portion of each.



or shortening. Add some whole grains or wheat germ, raisins, and nuts. Also, make the cookies mini-size. Use a teaspoon instead of a tablespoon for drop cookies and cut bar cookies into bite-size pieces. You can offer more varieties and you won't have to bake nearly as many.

- ◆ After a meal, go for a walk with your family to see holiday displays in your neighborhood.
- ◆ Brush your teeth after you eat. It will make it easier for you avoid a bed-time snack.

## Food safety

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration offers the following advice to help you keep your holiday foods safe:

- ◆ **Baked goods and eggnog:** Do not to eat raw fresh eggs. Raw eggs can contain bacteria that can cause an intestinal infection. Thorough cooking kills the bacteria that cause this infection.
- ◆ **Apple cider and other juices:** Apple cider is often served during the holiday season. Apple cider and most juices are pasteurized or otherwise treated to destroy harmful bacteria. Pasteurized juice can be found in the refrigerated or frozen sections of stores. Processed apple cider is also packaged in boxes, bottles, or cans. Unpasteurized juice is normally found in the refrigerated sections of grocery stores, health-food stores, cider mills, or farm markets. Such juices must have this warning on the label:

**WARNING: This product has not been pasteurized and therefore may contain harmful bacteria that can cause serious illness in children, the elderly, and persons with weakened immune systems.**

If you can't tell if a juice has been processed to destroy harmful bacteria, either don't use the product or boil it to kill any harmful bacteria.

- ◆ **Turkey:** Thawing the turkey completely before cooking it is extremely important to reduce the risk of food-borne illness. If a turkey is not properly thawed, the outside of the turkey will be done before the inside, and the inside will not have gotten hot enough in the cooking process to destroy disease-causing bacteria. Allow the correct amount of time to properly thaw and cook a whole turkey. For example, a 20-pound turkey needs 2-3 days to thaw completely when thawed in the refrigerator at a temperature of no more than 40 degrees Fahrenheit.



- ◆ You don't have to pass up the cheese tray entirely – just eat a small amount. Harder cheeses tend to be lower in fat than softer cheeses. If you pick the most flavorful cheese on the tray – a sharp cheddar or havarti – you won't want as much of it. And while you're at it, select a whole-wheat or multi-grain cracker instead of one made with refined grain.

- ◆ You'll enjoy your meals better if you eat slowly. You will also eat less, because your stomach will have time to realize it is "full."
- ◆ The bulk of your meal should consist of fruits and vegetables.
- ◆ Don't park yourself in front of the buffet at a party. Mingle! If you stand by the buffet, you'll eat more than you would if you were across the room.
- ◆ The holiday season can keep you on the go with little time to prepare meals. Fast food may be handy, but often is high in fat and calories. Prepare and freeze quick, healthy meals ahead of time to stay out of the fast-food trap.
- ◆ Don't deprive yourself of dessert if you want to eat it. Just eat smaller portions and make the healthiest choice. Apple pie is probably better than other holiday favorites because it contains fruit and not as much sugar and calories as other rich desserts. Pumpkin pie is also a healthier choice than cookies and cakes. Fruit salad makes a delicious desert too.
- ◆ If part of your holiday tradition involves baking cookies, make them with vegetable oil in place of solid fats



Read more holiday cooking tips from the CDC:

[www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/holidaycook.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/holidaycook.htm)

A stuffed turkey needs 4¼-5¾ hours to cook completely. To check a turkey for doneness, insert a food thermometer into the inner thigh area near the breast of the turkey but not touching bone. The turkey is done when the temperature reaches 180° F. If the turkey is stuffed, the temperature of the stuffing should be 165° F.

- ◆ **Mail-order food gifts:** Be careful with mail-order food gifts, such as meat, poultry, fish, and other perishables like cheese, fruit, and cheesecake. If you send a perishable gift, alert the recipient to the pending arrival of the food gift. If you receive a perishable package, open it immediately to make sure that, if it is labeled “keep refrigerated,” the food arrives in a chilled state.

## *Other ways to stay fit*

Fitness means more than being “in shape” or athletic. Staying fit also means staying healthy – physically and emotionally.

### **Manage stress**

- ◆ **Holidays can be stressful.** In small quantities, some stress is good. But too much stress can not only spoil your holiday spirit, but also make you physically sick.
- ◆ **Limit commitments.** Make room for what really matters for you. The rest can wait until January!
- ◆ **Make sure you get enough sleep** – at least 7 hours each night.

- ◆ **Avoid over-spending.** You don't have to buy expensive gifts to have happy memories. And you shouldn't feel obligated to give gifts to your coworkers or boss.

### **Honor traditions**

Holiday traditions bring families together. The passing of values from one generation to another gives family members a sense of belonging and stability.



Just make sure your traditions are enjoyable and meaningful to you and your family.

### **Travel safely**

Whether it's across town or around the world, take a few extra minutes to ensure that your trip is safe:

- ◆ **Don't drink and drive,** and don't let someone else drink and drive – ever.
- ◆ **Wear a safety belt** every time you drive or ride in a motor vehicle.
- ◆ Before you drive in cold weather, **stock your vehicle** with emergency supplies and find out if there are any travel advisories issued by the National Weather Service. Avoid traveling in poor-visibility conditions or on ice-covered roads, overpasses, and bridges.

### **Dress warmly**

Dress in several layers of loose-fitting, tightly woven clothing,

and stay dry. Wool, silk, or polypropylene are better than cotton at holding body heat, especially when wet – whether from excessive perspiration or rain/snow.

### **Prevent injuries**

The majority of holiday injuries result from falling off ladders, roofs, furniture, stairs, and porches – likely the result of putting up decorations. Most residential fires occur during the winter months. Take steps to protect yourself and your family:

- ◆ When hanging decorations, use step stools instead of furniture. **Use ladders safely.**
- ◆ **Keep candles away from doors,** walkways, landings, trees, and curtains. Place them on sturdy tables, and keep them out of the reach of pets and small children. Never leave burning candles unattended.
- ◆ **Have a working smoke alarm** on every floor of your home, including the basement. Be sure to place smoke alarms near rooms where people sleep.

### **Wash your hands often**

Frequent hand washing is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of germs. It's the combination of the soap and scrubbing action that helps dislodge and remove germs.

Wash your hands with soap and clean running water for at least 20 seconds.

If soap and clean water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

*The holidays are a time to celebrate, give thanks, and reflect. They are also a time to pay special attention to your health. Give the gift of health and safety to yourself and others by following these holiday tips.*

Sources:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2009.  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2009.



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 Exercise and eat  
 healthy foods  
 this holiday  
 season.

# Stay Fit During the Holidays

## Instructions

1. Post this record sheet where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Keep track of the days when you eat healthful meals and are physically active for a minimum of 30 minutes daily.
3. At the end of the month, total the number of days you met the goal. You must meet this goal at least 22 days out of the month to complete the Challenge. Then keep up this healthy practice for a lifetime of best health!
4. Keep this record for evidence of completion.

**MONTH:**

HC = Health Challenge™ • ex. min. = exercise minutes

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary
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\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I ate healthful meals

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days I was physically active for at least 30 minutes



## Other wellness projects completed this month:

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Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_