

Holiday De-Stress Guide

Week 4: Exercise over the Holidays



You are busy, it is cold out, you are stressed... why not take a break from exercise until the New Year? Slacking off on your exercise program during the holidays will only leave you with more pounds – and stress – come the New Year. Add exercise to the top of your “to do” list this holiday.

How does exercise help you relax?

It is no secret that physical activity does a body good. But, did you know that physical activity can **decrease** the production of *stress hormones* and improve your natural *stress response*?

Physical activity:

- ▶ **Increases production of feel-good neurotransmitters (i.e., endorphins):** you will feel happy, alert, and energized as your stresses melt away.
- ▶ **Is meditation in movement:** by drawing your attention away from the day’s stressor, you will have more energy and remain calm in everything you do.
- ▶ **Improves your mood:** regular physical activity increases self-confidence and lowers symptoms of anxiety. You will feel a new sense of command over your body and life.

Other benefits of physical activity that coincide with a stress-free life:

- Chronic disease prevention (e.g., diabetes)
- Injury prevention
- Enhanced immune response
- Promotes sleep

Why exercise is *especially* important during the holidays?

1. Physical activity will help you keep off the holiday pounds:

People gain about a **pound** over the winter season – and that pound usually does not come off. Your metabolism slows down as you age, making it even harder to shed those pesky holiday pounds. Just **30 min.** of jogging a day can burn *300 calories* – enough to let you indulge in a holiday treat without worry.

2. You will feel jollier

It is a fact that physical activity makes you happier. 20 to 30 minutes of exercise is all that is needed to get an endorphin rush. You will be able to tackle your holiday tasks with smile and cheer.

3. You will have more energy to tackle everything else

Contrary to popular belief, physical activity **can** help boost your energy. You will have more energy to enjoy what is important to you this holiday season.



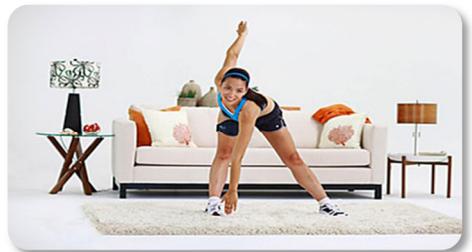
If someone told you there is a gift that could make you **happier, healthier,** and more **energetic,** wouldn't you want it now? **You can have it now... get active!**

Canadian Physical Activity Recommendations

- To achieve health benefits, accumulate at least **150 minutes** of physical activity per week
- Focus on *moderate-to vigorous-intensity* aerobic physical activity in bouts of **10 min. or more**
- Add muscle and bone strengthening activity at least 2 days per week

Tips to Stay Active this Holiday Season

- ✓ **Combine exercise and family commitments:** want to enjoy the holiday lights? Instead of driving, walk! Sledding, cross-country skiing, and skating are other inexpensive (and fun!) options.
- ✓ **Create a home workout routine:** many exercises (e.g., push-ups, lunges, squats) don't require equipment.
- ✓ **Be flexible:** do not blow off your workout when the days get busy. Try a brisk walk at lunch.
- ✓ **Commit to exercise:** organize tomorrow, today! Schedule exercise as though it is an important appointment. Tell others about this commitment too.
- ✓ **Enjoy the outdoors:** shoveling snow is a great way to fit in activity. While outdoors take time to clear your head and enjoy the winter scenery.
- ✓ **Make early New Year resolutions:** start working toward your wellness goals by December 1. Write your goals down and post where you will see often. Try making a vision board [goal board with pictures]. Look at it every day.
- ✓ **Allow for "me" time:** set aside 30 minutes – 1 hour a day to exercise. Go to the gym by yourself if you are feeling overwhelmed. Enjoy "me" time during the often chaotic holidays.
- ✓ **Record your physical activity:** monitor your daily activities by keeping an "exercise diary." Are you doing enough? Is it time to reward yourself? Keeping a log is especially important when trying to balance a busy schedule.



Resources: www.webmd.com, www.csep.ca, www.healthcentral.com