

# Q.

What are some healthy ways to manage holiday stress?

# A.

The holidays are supposed to be fun and festive. But if you're stressed out, you might feel like

The Grinch, Ebenezer Scrooge, and Santa's nemesis Krampus all mixed together. Sound familiar? An estimated 62 percent of adults feel "somewhat" or "very" stressed out during the holidays.<sup>1</sup> There's a lot going on with work, family, travel, vacation, shopping, and the everyday stuff...not including the holidays.

So what should you do when you're stressed out and not feeling any holiday cheer?

## 1. Recognize signs of stress

It's a good place to start. Instead of just trying to put on a happy face, pay attention to how you're feeling. Holiday stress can come in many forms, like:

- Fatigue
- Irritability
- Trouble sleeping
- Sadness
- Anxiety
- Body aches and pains
- Forgetfulness
- Overeating or drinking too much

If you're stressed out during the holidays, you're not alone. There's no holiday-magic to beat stress, but you can do something about it.

## 2. Be active

Just 20 to 30 minutes of daily walking, yoga, or other exercise



can improve your mood as well as physical health.

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## 3. Breathe

It might sound too simple during a hectic-holiday season, but it really works. Try it:

- Take 10 deep breaths.
- Inhale, then exhale...slowly.

Deep breathing has a calming effect that can reduce stressful feelings such as anger, anxiety, and fear. Making this a regular habit can also help lower blood pressure and increase your energy level.<sup>3</sup>

## 4. Get your Zzzs

You might be tempted to stay up late during the holidays and skimp on sleep. But when you don't get enough sleep, hormones linked to stress go up. This can lead to fatigue, weight gain, mood swings, and other health problems.

Aim to sleep 7 to 8 hours a night. If that's a challenge, take a nap during the day too. Adequate sleep can help reduce stress and restore the body to a relaxed state.<sup>4</sup>

# ASK THE WELLNESS DOCTOR

## 5. Make the holidays merry and bright

There's more than one way to manage stress during the holidays. Regular exercise, good sleep, and deep breathing can help. Here are some other ways to make the holidays merry and bright:

- Eat a healthy diet.
- Spend time with family and friends.
- Read a book.
- Laugh more.
- And make time for a hobby you enjoy.

If you're always stressed out, talk to your doctor or ask a professional for help. You'll feel better and live longer.

## References

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