

Health tip: Healthier ways for the holidays

The holiday season may make it challenging to stay physically and mentally healthy. With indulgent food, busy schedules, and added stress, it's easy to fall out of healthy routines. However, with a little planning and mindfulness, you may enjoy the holidays while making choices that support your well-being.



Tips for healthier holiday eating¹

- 1. Don't skip meals.** Skipping meals to “save calories” often leads to overeating later.
- 2. Bring a healthy dish.** Ensure there's at least one nutritious option at potlucks.
- 3. Pick your splurges.** Choose a couple of holiday favorites to enjoy in place of everyday foods.
- 4. Add color.** Make your plate festive and balanced by filling half with fruits and vegetables.
- 5. Be smart with drinks.** Limit alcohol and sugary cocktails (150–450 calories each). Opt for water, seltzer with fruit, or herbal teas with honey.



Exercise during the holidays²

- 1. Schedule exercise.** Block time on your calendar and treat it as non-negotiable.
- 2. Walk while shopping.** Take laps around the mall or store to get extra steps.
- 3. Take the stairs.** A simple way to boost your heart rate throughout the day.
- 4. Park farther away.** Skip the closest spot and enjoy a short walk.
- 5. Walk to see lights.** Instead of driving, bundle up and stroll through decorated neighborhoods.



Consider a budget friendly holiday³

Plan your holiday spending to avoid financial stress. This could mean setting a budget, picking up extra work hours, finding a seasonal job, or selling unused items from your home. Having a plan not only helps you stay on track but also gives you a sense of control and empowerment during the season.

Some considerations for holiday spending:

- Create a budget and stick to it
- Suggest a gift exchange
- If traveling, book early and consider traveling during off-season peak hours
- Get creative with gift-giving
- Start traditions that are lower in cost, such as a drive to look at holiday lights



Tips for coping with holiday stress⁴

The holidays may be joyful, but also stressful – which may lead to overeating or feeling overwhelmed. Here are some ways to better manage holiday stress:

- 1. Create a game plan.** Get organized early. Make shopping lists and plan your menu ahead of time.
- 2. Learn to say no.** You don't have to say yes to every invitation or request. Protect your time and energy.
- 3. Prioritize your health.** Stick to your sleep schedule and fit in regular exercise – even short sessions throughout the day.
- 4. Take breaks.** Step away when stress builds. Try deep breathing, calming music, or a quiet moment alone.
- 5. Seek help if needed.** If you feel persistently sad, anxious, or overwhelmed, talk to a doctor or mental health professional.



Focus on mindfulness⁵

- 1. Accept imperfection.** Before the holidays, acknowledge things may not go exactly as planned. It's okay to not be perfect.
- 2. Where does this fit in the grand scheme of things?** Don't let the long grocery line spoil your afternoon.
- 3. Respond with kindness.** You may not change how others act, but you may change how you respond to situations.
- 4. Extend an act of kindness.** Reach out to those you know are without family and friends during the holidays.



Sources:

1. Lee Health. <https://www.leehealth.org/health-and-wellness/healthy-news-blog/exercise-and-nutrition/10-healthy-eating-habits-for-the-holidays>. 2024. Accessed December 2025.
2. CDC. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-weight-growth/about/healthier-holidays-in-1-2-3.html>. 2023. Accessed November 2025.
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4. DBH: Dana Behavioral Health - <https://www.danabehavioralhealth.org/protecting-your-mental-health-during-the-holiday-season-a-comprehensive-guide/>. 2024. Accessed November 2025.
5. Michigan State University. https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/bring_mindfulness_to_the_holidays 2023. Accessed November 2025.

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