



How to maintain healthy habits during the holidays

With the busy holiday season almost here, committing to new wellness goals like losing weight, improving your diet or building muscle may be more than you can tackle. So instead of setting your sights on a new goal, work to maintain the healthy habits that are currently part of your daily routine and set yourself up for a strong start in the new year.

Here are some areas to focus your efforts on with some easy maintenance tips:

EATING HEALTHY

- Use recipe substitutions when prepping your favorite holiday foods. For example, limit your number of sugary toppings and use non-fat, plain Greek yogurt instead of sour cream to cut your fat intake.
- Don't show up to get-togethers hungry. Doing so can cause you to graze on unhealthy hors d'oeuvres. Have a healthy snack before you leave the house, like sliced apples or celery sticks with peanut butter.
- Be selective with sweets. Desserts made with graham cracker crusts are generally lower in fat than the traditional homemade pie crusts. If you can't resist trying the pumpkin pie, then just take a smaller slice.
- Avoid liquid calories. Alcohol is perhaps the biggest contributor to weight gain during the holiday season, especially sugary, carbonated beverages. Make sure you drink water instead.

GETTING EXERCISE

- It can be tempting to skip the gym when you are pressed for time. Maintain your regular exercise schedule but opt for shorter workouts with a little more intensity.
- Walk an extra lap when holiday shopping or take a parking spot that's furthest away. All those additional steps lead to more calories burned and keep your back and hips limber.
- Due to the weather, there will be days when getting outside is simply not possible. Therefore, you can always add indoor exercises like squats, heel raises and push-ups in between your daily activities.

REDUCING STRESS

- Get a notebook and write down when something makes you feel stressed. Then write how you reacted and what you did to deal with the stress.
- Divert your racing thoughts for a little while by listening to relaxing music or finding a podcast that inspires you.
- Learn ways to relax your body through meditation, yoga or relaxing exercises like tai chi.
- Sometimes stress is just too much to handle alone. Let your feelings out. Talk, laugh and cry when you need to with someone you trust.