

Healing Arts Update

A guide for wellness.

December 2007

December signals the start of the holiday countdown--shopping, gift giving and sharing special moments with loved ones and friends. Unfortunately, family, finances and physical demands also can trigger a holiday meltdown.

It's a medical fact that stress can ruin both your holiday and your health. But it doesn't have to be that way. Yes, Virginia, it is possible to experience a healthy holiday season!

This month, we offer several tips to help you enjoy the holiday season.

In this issue

- WELL BEING by John Patton, AP, LMHC
- NUTRITION+YOU
- WE'RE GLAD YOU ASKED
- VIP (Very Important Product)

NUTRITION+YOU



The holidays are upon us and so is the urge to overeat. Delicious food and drinks are an integral part of the holiday season, and it's easy to lose track of good nutrition when you're in the holiday spirit. And although we don't like to admit to it, the fact is that a large

percentage of our annual weight gain accumulates during the holiday season.

There are many reasons why you may overeat during the holidays. Unrealistic expectations, financial pressure, time constraints and social obligations are the chief causes of stress-based holiday overeating. Sure, the holidays can play havoc with your health, but a few sound nutritional tips can help you maintain your well being.

Eat more mini-meals. You can keep your energy level at full ramp and also avoid the allure of a sugar-buzz high if you eat five small meals throughout the day. Smaller, well-balanced meals can help keep your insulin and glucose levels steady throughout the day, minimize food cravings and mood swings, and also help you avoid overeating.

Serve yourself. Well-intentioned hosts often undermine your healthy eating goals, so politely insist on serving yourself. Use a smaller plate to help with portion control. Eat slowly, chew well and enjoy every mouthful.

WELL BEING by John Patton, AP, LMHC



Holidays can be the best of times and the worst of times. Tidings of comfort and joy can be easily crushed by the monumental stress to do it all, be it all and buy it all. And holiday stress is nothing to ho-ho-ho about.

According to one study, holiday stress and overindulgence are two key factors in the soaring rate of heart attacks that typically occur each year during December and January.

Overindulgence--whether it's eating, drinking, spending money or making too many commitments--can contribute to unnecessary stress. An awareness of the three main triggers of seasonal stress can help you avoid common holiday pitfalls.

Relationships. Anyone with a pulse knows that relationships can cause turmoil and stress at

Moderate. During the holidays, some of your favorite guilty-pleasure foods are bound to make a cameo appearance. It's okay to enjoy your favorites, but in moderation. Depriving yourself, as much as over-indulgence, can sabotage your holiday nutrition goals. Enjoy responsibly.

Hydrate. Remember to drink plenty of water. Drinking water can help increase your energy and boost endurance. A natural appetite suppressant, water also helps the body metabolize stored fat. Since the appetite messages for thirst and hunger are the same, don't confuse the need to drink water with the urge to eat.

Be active. Don't abandon your exercise routine during the holidays. Exercise is a great stress buster and can prevent holiday weight gain. One of the most basic tools to help your heart, lungs and circulatory system, exercise also boosts your energy level, lowers blood pressure and cholesterol levels, and reduces your risk of coronary artery disease.

WE'RE GLAD YOU ASKED

Q: Due to personal circumstances, I'm dreading the holidays this year. Any suggestions for how to cope?



A: Holiday blues are a common problem despite the fact that as a society, we see the holidays as a joyous time. For many people, the holiday season is anything but blissful and can trigger a bout of the blues or feelings of depression.

Although serious, holiday blues should not be confused with another condition called Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), a clinically diagnosed mood disorder that usually occurs during the winter months.

If you have recently lost a loved one or are separated from family, it's understandable that the holidays might be a difficult time. Allow yourself to feel sad, lonely or melancholy, as these are normal feelings, particularly during the holidays.

This may be a good time for you to let go of the past and create new or different ways to celebrate the holidays. Try something different. Tap into compassion and the spirit of the season and volunteer to help someone. There's joy to be found in delivering presents for Santa or helping at a homeless shelter.

Practice pleasure. Pleasure and joy can counteract feelings of depression. Even if you're feeling blue, there may be some little thing that gives you pleasure-- a favorite song

any time of the year. But during the holidays, emotions often run at full throttle. Gatherings of family and friends typically bring together a diverse mix of personality types. Add a smattering of alcohol and one seemingly benign comment can easily escalate to a misunderstanding or conflict.

Finances. Like relationships, finances can cause anxiety at any time of the year. But the effects of holiday overspending on gifts, travel, clothes, food and entertainment can linger long after the decorations are boxed up. Overspending can cause feelings of depression and hopelessness-- not a healthy start to your New Year.

Obligations. Holiday obligations can take their toll on your health. Endless rounds of holiday parties and gift giving can leave you physically fatigued and emotionally spent. Exhaustion and stress are factors that can compromise your immune system and undermine your health.

How can you increase your enjoyment of the holidays? Here are five simple coping strategies.

Be realistic. Holiday TV specials are filled with

or musical group, a book you've wanted to read, an old movie. Even a small amount of pleasure is a reminder that life can be okay.

Reach out to people, especially those who care about you. Start new holiday traditions. Be grateful for what you do have and all the positive things that have happened in your life.

Remember that the holiday blues are short-lived and usually subside once the season is over and you resume your daily routine. However, if these feelings persist or you feel that you may suffer from clinical depression, please seek professional help.

Have a question?

VIP (Very Important Product)

With a focus on maintaining your health during the holidays, this month our feature product is the Healing Arts Center's Antiox Pack Plus.



The specific combination of nutrients contained in our Antiox Pack Plus packets has been used in clinical practice for many years to support cardiovascular health and immune function.

Key to the effectiveness of Antiox Pack Plus is the synergistic action of antioxidants that depend on each other for maximum effectiveness. Antioxidants exert their fullest protective benefits through a series of related actions called the antioxidant cascade.

Antiox Pack Plus supplies significant amounts of key nutritional antioxidants and cofactors that activate antioxidant pathways and help protective cellular mechanisms operate at high efficiency.

Each bottle contains 30 packets.

Order now

happy endings. In real life, however, things don't always go as planned. Do your best, stay flexible, and embrace the true meaning of the holiday season.

Don't overextend.

Before you shop, set a budget and stick to it. Don't try to buy happiness-- yours or someone else's-- with an avalanche of gifts. Statistics show that it takes an average of six months to pay off holiday bills. Don't be a victim of holiday indebtedness.

Self care. We tend to put everyone else first during the holidays, so remember to take care of yourself. Be realistic about what you can and cannot do. Take a daily personal inventory to help ensure that you stay centered. Eat right, exercise and drink plenty of water.

Rest. Essential for physical regeneration, rest and sleep also are vital for your mental and spiritual well being. The need to sustain a sufficient level of energy during the holidays can be a challenge. Try to set aside adequate down time to rest and restore.

On a personal note, this holiday season I want to say a heartfelt thanks to all my patients for giving me the opportunity to help you.

Thank you, too, to the friends and family members who have been referred to me. I'm very grateful for the many friendships that have resulted. May this be your happiest and healthiest holiday ever!

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