



BMC HEALTH LETTER

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Health & the Holidays

As the weather becomes cooler, we find ourselves a little more sedentary as we enjoy indoor activities and a variety of seasonal foods with soporific effects. More times than not, we come out of this festive month heading full steam ahead into the holiday season with more of the same sedentary yet festive activities.

Plan ahead with creativity and make each fall activity one with a positive effect on the mind and body. Making a plan of action will not only reduce negative physical effects but will also combat controllable stressors. Here are some steps to create a positive impact on health.

- Take a realistic assessment of what you can do and what activities are most important to you.
- Next, make a promise to yourself not to overbook your calendar. Schedule time on your calendar to rest as you take on a few extra social activities along with your normal daily grind.
- Put at least 3 days each week on your calendar to set aside an appointment for physical activity. You can incorporate this into a traditional activity such as a family holiday meal but with a fun outdoor activity with a little competitive edge such as a nature scavenger hunt, family football game, or backyard sack race.
- Plan meals to have twice the options of non-starchy vegetables than those loaded with grain or wheat rich carbohydrates. Offer a bowl of fresh fruit and berries as a side dish, introduce a new, nutrient dense recipe for dessert, offer olive oil as an alternative to butter, whole wheat to white bread, and tea flavored with fresh mint leaves or lemon grass rather than sweet tea or Splenda tea.

Holiday Eating Tips From the Dietitian

The holidays are exciting times to spend with friends and family, but for some, they can also cause stress around food. Here are some practical tips to help you mindfully manage your holiday eating:

- Reject the "all or nothing" mentality. Its okay to have both nutritious foods and holiday treats.
- Start with small servings of all the foods you want to try. You can always go back for seconds of your favorites.
- Take people up on their offer to bring home leftovers. If there are multiple desserts or dishes that look good, eat one now and take some home for tomorrow too!
- Be sure to eat breakfast, even if there is a big meal planned later. When your body has enough calories and nutrients, you likely will not be as ravenously hungry, and you will be less likely to overeat.
- Enjoy your family recipe favorites & remember that this is one meal out of thousand a year. Its the day to day consistency that makes more of an impact than a temporary holiday diet.
- Give yourself permission to eat and enjoy ALL foods. Don't be so focused on food restrictions and diets that you cannot enjoy time with your family. Food is more than macros & calories, it is also part of community & culture. One holiday's worth of food doesn't change your nutritional health.

Practicing Gratitude

Showing thankfulness or gratitude is a way to appreciate what one has rather than attempting to find happiness by struggling to reach something one feels will satisfy everything they physically and materially want. Focusing on things one has rather than things one lacks is practicing gratitude. In a study by University of Pennsylvania psychologists it was found that people who wrote about or openly expressed gratitude had more positive feelings towards other people in their lives and felt better about themselves. Some ways to exercise gratitude:

- Write thank you notes
- Mentally think a thankful thought
- Keep a gratitude journal
- Say a prayer of thanks