

A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a white Santa hat and a black and orange sports bra, is smiling and pointing towards the camera. She is standing next to a large green Christmas wreath decorated with red ornaments. The background is a vibrant red with falling white snowflakes. The overall theme is festive and healthy.

Stay  
Healthy  
for the  
HOLIDAYS



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# Eating Healthy

**'Tis the season for a superabundance of grub.**

Whatever Santa delivers on Christmas morning pales in comparison to the amount of calories available throughout the holidays. The CDC offers some tips on eating healthier with temptation at every turn, whether dealing with a chronic health condition such as diabetes or high blood pressure, or not. Don't deprive yourself. Eat your aunt's choice pie, but also make sure you're exercising.

## MAKE A PLAN

You may not be able to control what

food you're served, and you're going to see other people eating tempting treats. Get out in front with a plan.

1. Eat close to your usual times to keep your blood sugar steady. If your meal is served later than normal, eat a small snack at your usual mealtime and eat a little less when dinner is served.

2. Invited to a party? Offer to bring a healthy dish along.

3. If you have a sweet treat, cut back on other carbs (like potatoes and bread) during the meal.

4. Don't skip meals to save up for a feast. It will be harder to manage your blood sugar, and you'll be really hungry and more likely to overeat.

5. If you slip up, get right back to healthy eating with your next meal.

## OUTWIT THE BUFFET TABLE

When you face a spread of delicious holiday food, make healthy choices easier.

1. Have a small plate of the foods you like best and then move away from the buffet table.

2. Start with vegetables to take the edge off your appetite.

3. Eat slowly. It takes at least 20 minutes for your brain to realize you're full.

4. Avoid or limit alcohol. If you do have an alcoholic drink, have it with food. Alcohol can lower blood sugar

and interact with diabetes medicines.

5. Plan to stay on top of your blood sugar. Check it more often during the holidays, and if you take medicine, ask your doctor if the amount needs to be adjusted.

## HOLIDAY RARITIES

The holidays are the time you'll get to eat the rarest of dishes throughout the year. Instead of stacking your plate with everything you can, try to take only the dishes you will eat once a year on it.

Prioritize and place small portions of grandma's pumpkin pie, your uncle's holiday turkey and other holiday favorites on your plate.

# Fitness Challenges

One good way to stay healthy during the holidays is participating in a fitness challenge at work.

These positive activities can change the culture of the work environment by continuing into the new year. Think Health provides some tips.

## **WEIGHT CHALLENGE**

A popular fitness challenge for the holiday season revolves around weight management. During the holidays, merely maintaining existing weight could be a winner. But increased physical activity is a great way to keep potential weight gain in check.

Here are a few employee fitness challenge ideas for the holidays. Some workplaces award employees "points" if they:

- Walk at least 12,000 steps per day.
- Exercise for a minimum of 30 minutes per day.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Participate in "Mile-Per-Day" for specific aerobic activities.

Another option is completing a community event such as a walk or run. Many cities have a "Jingle Bell Run." Also, have a stretching session for 15 minutes a day.



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## **CREATING A 'CHALLENGE' CULTURE**

The most important factor is getting your team excited for these challenges. Once you have buy-in, your team will start to look forward to the next challenge and have fun in the process.

For each challenge, get creative, then set the parameters. Challenges can be completed individually, in teams or as an entire company to

reach the overall goal with points awarded for completing a specific task. For example, award one point per 30-minute workout, or maybe you decide on a popular location and take an imaginary company "road trip" based on how many miles the company collectively achieves.

Incentives and rewards are important and can help inspire your employees to work a little harder during the

challenges. Reaching or exceeding the goal could earn employees a jeans day, a healthy catered lunch, gift cards to local companies or other health-conscious items.

## **POST MEAL WALKS**

Spending so much time with family, eating meal after meal and relaxing in between, can make your body feel off during the holidays. Physical activity in a crowded home

can become nearly impossible. Your secret weapon this holiday season is getting outside and walking around your family home.

Gather friends or family together and take a walk after each meal.

You don't have to walk very much or very far, but giving your body the chance to burn some calories during the season can help you feel less bloated and full.

# Drink Smarter

Liquid calories count — particularly that delicious eggnog on Christmas Eve.

Holiday drinking can be a Grand Canyon-sized pothole to maintaining your health during the holidays. If drinking alcoholic beverages is part of your holiday revelry, practice moderation and use these tips from the Mayo Clinic to help you make good choices.

**Drink water between alcoholic drinks.** Not only will this help keep you hydrated, but also it will help slow down your drinking pace and keep you comfortable in a social setting. (No one has to know it's not alcohol.)

**Use low-calorie mixers.** No-calorie soda or tonic water, or lemon and lime wedges, can help reduce added calories. You can also make healthier ingredient swaps without sacrificing flavor. For instance, use low-fat milk in your eggnog and cut the amount of cream in half — or skip it entirely.

**Practice moderation.** Enjoy and savor your drinks by sipping slowly. Being mindful can help you reduce your overall calorie intake without feeling restricted. What is the definition of moderation? No more than one standard drink a day for women of all ages and men older than 65, and up to two standard drinks a day for men age 65 and younger.

**Keep the focus on family and friends.** Remember the reason for the gatherings: a time to celebrate with those you love.

**Remember that alcohol may increase appetite and lead to eating more.** A little planning can go a long way when you're in the mood to munch. Fruit and veggies with dip are always good options to have on hand.



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Lightly buttered popcorn, nuts and whole-wheat crackers with cheese are also good snack staples. Set realistic holiday goals. An all-or-nothing approach rarely works. Be honest with yourself and set a plan before an event where drinking might take place.

It can be easy to drink a few more

beers or cocktails during the holidays, being surrounded by family and friends. Do not take a chance with alcohol. Use these tips to plan ahead before you celebrate the holidays this year.

- Make sure you have a ride home or a place to sleep if you find yourself getting too intoxicated to drive.

- Do not assume you can have a cup of coffee, a light nap, and be okay to drive home afterward. If you plan to leave a party early, you should stop drinking early.

- A drink an hour can be a good way to slowly pace yourself and drink in moderation. Have one drink per hour accompanied by plenty of water.

# Mall Walking

Kill two birds with one stone this holiday season by making a visit to the mall to shop for friends and family, as well as get in a workout.

Mall walking is still a thing. Malls open early for walkers, so get a couple of miles in before the stores open.

## WHY SAY 'YES' TO MALL WALKING?

The recommended amount of physical activity to reduce health risks is 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity exercise, such as brisk walking, spread throughout the week in workouts of 10 minutes or more. Very Well Fit outlines a number of advantages to doing that in the mall.

- Out of the weather:** Inside a climate-controlled mall. No wind, rain, snow, ice or heat.

- Safely away from traffic:** Inside the mall, you don't have to worry about dodging cars. There are no intersections to cross, no broken glass or bushes obstructing the path, no auto fumes or rush hour traffic.

- Security:** Mall cops are always on duty.

- Safety:** If you have an accident or medical emergency, you will be seen by other walkers and mall staff and get medical assistance.

- Restrooms and water:** Enough said.

- Cafes and snacks:** A cup of



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coffee is just a short detour away.

## START A MALL WORKOUT

Start at an easy pace to warm up for three to five minutes. Then pick up the pace so you are breathing harder than usual. Maintain this pace for at least 10 minutes at a time. You

can also add intervals of higher intensity by taking the stairs or walking as fast as you can for 30 seconds to a minute. At the end of your walk, slow to an easy pace for a couple of minutes.

Typical distances in 30 minutes would be 1 to 2 miles or 2,000 to 5,000 steps. Typical

distances in 60 minutes would be 2 to 4 miles or 4,000 to 8,000 steps.

## SKIP THE ELEVATOR

Most malls come with multiple floors for you to explore. Instead of taking the elevators as you usually do, take the stairs this holiday season. Stairs

are a great and safe workout you can do to work your entire body.

Stair workouts can crank up your heart rate, burn fat and engages your glutes, hamstrings and quads. There is no need to rush going up and down the stairs, so go at a safe, slow pace.

# Sharing Family History

Give religion and politics a rest at the dinner table this holiday season.

Instead, do yourself a favor by striking up a conversation about family health history.

Thanksgiving is National Family History Day. A conversation like this can be a buzzkill, but simply because you have a family history of disease doesn't mean you'll definitely get a disease. Especially if you act on the information. The information could literally mean many more holidays spent together.

## HOW TO COLLECT A FAMILY HEALTH HISTORY

The CDC recommends the following steps:

**1. Talk to your family.** Write down the names of your close relatives from both sides of the family — parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews. Talk to these family members about what conditions they have or had, and at what age the conditions were first diagnosed. You might think you know about all of the conditions of your parents or siblings, but you might find out more information if you ask.

**2. Ask questions.** To find out about your risk for chronic disease, ask your relatives about which diseases they have had and when they were diagnosed.

**3. Record the information and update it whenever**



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**you learn new family health history information.** My Family Health Portrait, a free web-based tool, is helpful in organizing the information in your family health history.

**4. Share family health history information with your doctor and other family members.**

## BE UPFRONT WITH INFORMATION

If you have a medical condition, such as cancer, heart disease or diabetes, be sure to let your family members know about your diagnosis. If you have had genetic testing done, share your results with your family members. If you are one

of the older members of your family, you may know more about diseases and health conditions in your family. Be sure to share this information with your younger relatives.

## PROVIDE DOCUMENTATION

Ask and provide family med-

ical records and even death certificates for your family.

Collect any information your family members are willing to share with you and keep it somewhere safe in case you need it in the future. Make sure the information is secured and out of the hands of all except your family.

# Coping with Grief

Facing Christmas alone or while grieving can be emotionally burdensome. The first year without a loved one will be harder than ever.

Cruse Bereavement Care offers suggestions for ways to cope.

1. One of the things that can help is to spend some time trying to work out which arrangements will best suit your needs and the needs of others who share your loss. Some bereaved people find that they do not wish to celebrate the holidays at all, while some find that simply maintaining their routine and celebrating as normal is the best tribute they can pay their loved one. It may feel important to make a special effort to remember the person who has died. These can be things that we do alone, or with friends or family. You may have photos or particular memories which you treasure; sharing these with others may be something that brings you together.

2. We know that people remember and mourn in different ways. Conflict within a family can sometimes arise when we have expectations of how others should grieve, so try to be sensitive to others' needs, and talk openly about what will be best for you.

3. Routine is important. The holidays may mean that your



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normal routine is disrupted, and this can make it easier to forget to look after yourself. Trying to keep to regular patterns of sleeping and eating are small things that can make a difference.

4. Go easy on the drink. It's tempting to drink more on festi-

tive occasions, and it can feel like a drink might help you manage difficult feelings. But using alcohol as an escape is only temporary relief and can lead to longer-term problems.

6. Skip the Christmas movies. It can be tough when you are bombarded by images of

people enjoying happy family times.

7. Talk to someone. Phone a friend or even reach out to a professional organization. That's why they're there.

One of the best ways to celebrate the life of a loved one that passed is to remember

and share stories of the good times. Share funny stories or touching memories.

These kinds of stories and memories can not only help you in your bereavement but also strengthen and create new memories and bonds with loved ones.



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# Give the Gift of Health

Staying healthy for the holidays can be made easier by giving gifts to family and friends that promote health.

Harvard's School of Public Health has some ideas for adopting a health theme for your holiday shopping.

## OLIVE OIL

This may already be a pantry staple, but splurging on a high-quality oil — something many people typically don't buy for themselves — is a gift that will truly delight the taste buds. Also, consider some special oils, such as hazelnut, walnut oil or roasted pumpkin seed oil, for a special flavor treat. For the true connoisseur, con-

sider giving an "oil of the month" subscription that will please their palate year-round.

## HERB SEED KIT

This easy-to-assemble and inexpensive present allows recipients to watch their gift grow, making it both fun and unique. It's especially great for kids.

## PEDOMETER

Every step counts especially during the holidays, when time for exercise is at a minimum. Though many phones

have a built-in pedometer, having an "old fashioned" one tucked in a purse or pocket is great motivation to stay active throughout the day, not to mention that keeping your pedometer separate from your phone may help minimize screen time.

## NUTS

While many people gift homemade sweets to friends, neighbors and coworkers, consider going with something more filling instead. Nuts offer protein and healthy fats with far less sugar, making it a satiating and healthy food gift. Feeling extra generous? Consider giving a "nut of the month" gift subscription, so your loved ones

can snack smart all year long.

## REUSABLE LUNCH BAG

Besides being better for the environment than paper bags, reusable lunch bags will inspire your gift recipients to make their own lunches instead of eating out, which may be better for both their waistline and their wallet.

## SLEEP MASK

Sleep is important, but it sometimes can be hard to come by. Starting with simple steps can help, including wearing a sleep mask to block out light. Available in many colors and materials, this easy-to-pack present can be taken on trips or kept on a bedside table.