Give Yourself the Gift of a Healthy Holiday

Healthy eating and exercise habits that will give you more energy, better health and lower stress.

By: The HeartBright Foundation  |  November 27, 2013  |  www.HeartBright.org

Healthy Eating

Maintaining healthy eating habits throughout the year helps to keep your blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar and weight at healthy levels. It is important to continue eating healthy during the holidays to stay on track for living a healthy lifestyle. It is ok to treat yourself once in a while to indulgences like stuffing, pies, cookies and other foods that you may avoid most of the time. Just remember that these are treats and should not be the staples of your diet.

Benefits of Eating Healthy during the Holiday Season

♥ You will maintain an even blood sugar level by eating something every 3-4 hours which will give you more energy for all those holiday chores.
♥ You will keep your blood pressure at a healthy level by not choosing salty snacks at holiday parties.
♥ You will keep your cholesterol at a healthy level by choosing lower fat versions of dairy products.

Tips on how to Eat Healthy during the Holiday Season

✓ Don’t give up your favorite holiday foods. Find a balance by consuming smaller portions and cut back on fat, sugar, and salt.
✓ When going to a party or dinner, eat a snack at least 20 minutes before leaving home to curb appetite. This may help prevent you from overeating.
✓ Offer to bring a dish, making it an “acceptable” low fat dish you can eat.
✓ Pumpkin or fruit pies have 50% fewer calories than pecan pie. You can reduce calories further if you don’t eat the pie crust. If you MUST have a “sinful” dessert, choose a small amount of something you love and save it for the end.
✓ Don’t skip meals. You’ll be less likely to overeat.
✓ Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated and energized. Drink a glass of water before every meal and you will feel fuller which will help you eat less.
✓ Choose the low fat versions of egg nog, cheese, milk, cream, sour cream and other dairy products when preparing meals. Your family won’t even notice the difference but your weight and cholesterol levels will thank you!
Exercise Habits

Staying physically active is important throughout the year in order to lower your risk and complications from Heart Disease, Diabetes and Hypertension. Many people use the excuse of being too busy during the holidays to maintain their usual fitness routines. By making the time each day to get some physical activity, you will reap many benefits.

Benefits of Exercise during the Holiday Season

♥ You will have more energy to get through the hectic holiday season.
♥ You will boost your self esteem and feel better about yourself because you are doing something healthy and positive for your body.
♥ You will look better in your clothes at holiday events and family gatherings.
♥ You will elevate your mood and prevent depression that is common during the holidays.

Tips to fit in More Physical Activity during the Holiday Season

✓ Get 30-60 minutes of cardio into your day by doing it first thing in the morning and making it your number one priority. If you wait till later in the day, you might not get it done if you are distracted with holiday plans.
✓ Take a long walk with your dog or invite friends and family to walk with you around the block after meals.
✓ Take an extra lap around the mall when you go shopping.
✓ Add 10 minutes of strength training to your day at home before you get into the shower by using dumbbells or resistance band exercises if you can’t get to the gym.
✓ Keep an exercise log to help you stay accountable to yourself and stay on track.

Lower Stress

According to the American Institute of Stress, More than 110 million Americans take medication for stress related causes each week. When the holidays come along, people already predisposed to stress can find themselves feeling blue and more stressed out than usual. The good news is you don't have to let stress ruin your holidays.

Benefits of keeping your Stress low during the Holiday Season

♥ You will keep your blood pressure at a healthy level which will lower your risk of Heart Disease and Hypertension.
♥ You will feel happier and healthier and will have more energy to spend with your family.

Tips to lower your stress during the Holiday Season

✓ Try to pinpoint what you're anxious about and then plan ahead for stressful times during the holidays, just like you plan ahead for any situation you want to avoid.
✓ Start by considering your attitude. Your attitude when you approach situations can make a huge difference. Ask yourself: Is your situation a small, medium or large problem? How upset do you want to get over it, and for how long? Look at the possibilities around you, not the restrictions. Expect the best but plan for the worst.
✓ Make realistic expectations and goals for the holiday season. Give yourself permission to not “do it all”.
✓ Trim your to-do list; many tasks are small enough to drop or delegate. Ask others for help.
✓ Make time for yourself