

- Holidays

How to prepare for a healthy holiday season Be healthy as you enjoy the holiday season with your loved ones.

Healthy habits that you should start now

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The holiday season should just be merry and bright but that's unrealistic. With the joy and merriment the Christmas season brings to my heart, it is also the most physically exhausting time of the year.



In major cities, we spend longer hours in traffic and we have to shop in places that are busier than usual. We have to work longer hours to compensate for our upcoming holiday break. We also have to sleep later than usual because of holiday activities.

While this season makes our hearts full, it could also take its toll on our bodies. When our bodies are overworked, sleep-deprived and always drained of energy, our immune system weakens and we easily get sick. Be it a common cold or more serious conditions like hypertension or elevated blood pressure and the like. Therefore, we have to prepare ourselves to have a healthy holiday season. Here are some tips on how to prepare for a healthy you this holiday season.

Feed your gut microbiome

Our intestines house trillions of live microorganisms that play a role in crucial processes in the body affecting one's immunity, mental state, weight, and so much more. This world of microbes in your intestines is called the gut microbiome or gut microbiota. These beneficial microbes die when we lack sleep, take antibiotics, are under stress, smoke, and eat ultra-processed food, refined sugars, and unhealthy fats. They die when we don't feed them with prebiotics or fiber.

If you wish to have a stronger immune system and don't end up feeling bloated during the festive season, begin eating at least two servings of fresh fruits daily like two medium-sized bananas, and at least one to two cups of cooked vegetables daily. If you have difficulty making fresh produce available, then it's time for you to consider taking modified functional food. These are fruits, vegetables, herbs, spices, and other plant food sources that have been freeze-dried to preserve nutrients and packed in powdered form for nutrient concentration and convenience. Some examples would be powdered berries or wheatgrass. Just make sure to read the ingredients list. It should only contain ingredients from plant food sources with no preservatives and additives. You will not only need the fiber from plant food, you will also need the phytochemicals and antioxidants to boost your immune

system and regulate your bowel movement. This is very important especially when you eat unhealthy food during the holidays. Natural detoxification through regular bowel movements will help prevent you from getting sick.

Schedule your snooze

While the season is not at its peak yet, try to have a regular sleeping schedule as much as possible. Be realistic when setting a schedule of activities. Allow yourself nights when you can rest and recover instead of engaging in every single activity or attending every event that you're invited to. Learn to prioritize. The problem with not getting adequate sleep of at least seven hours is that your chances of getting increased blood sugar, high blood pressure, flu, headache, weight issues, mood swings, and respiratory infections such as flu will be at an all-time high. If you sleep less than seven hours, make sure you take a 10 to 30-minute power nap during the day. Why not nap for more than 30 minutes? It will make you more sluggish and may in fact disrupt your sleep pattern at night.

If you have trouble sleeping, get some sun exposure in the morning for about 10 minutes. Just be sure to wear a hat so you don't get sun spots. Sun exposure will help you regulate sleep by helping you produce sleep hormones at night. You can also take some chamomile tea, lavender tea or American ginseng which have adaptogenic properties for stress and could promote better sleep quality even if the sleep duration isn't long.

Get your check-up done

We normally have annual physical exams done at the start of the year. It would be prudent to have some minor blood work and get a check-up done just to make sure where you're at in terms of health status before you enjoy the holiday fete. If there are any abnormalities, your doctor can prescribe preventive medications and your dietitian can help you with food choices and recommendation for functional food and targeted supplementation as needed.

It is also important to watch your weight throughout the season. Having a body fat analyzer is a bonus. It will help you become more mindful of your habits while still enjoying the season.

Get moving

Even if you don't have a gym membership or exercise equipment at home, it is time to get moving in any way you can even before the festivities begin. This will give you more energy, help you have a better metabolism to burn more calories, and even regulate your mood and sleep. Walk in place or walk inside your home if you can't do it outside. Pace while talking on the phone. Go up and down the stairs instead of taking the elevator. Just keep walking and standing as much as you can throughout the day. Walk in place while watching your favorite television show. Better yet, schedule a type of exercise that you like for 30 minutes, five times a week. You can even break it down to 10-minute walks for three cycles in a day, perhaps before meals or during break time.

Be healthy as you enjoy the holiday season with your loved ones. Eat more fresh produce to, schedule your snooze, have your check-up and get moving.