How to boost metabolism during the holidays

The Manila Times · 3 Dec 2025 · C4

WITH December officially here, Filipinos are gearing up for parties, reunions, and festive feasts. But before indulging, it helps to consider metabolism. How the body processes energy affects not just weight but overall health and well-being.



In the Philippines, this issue is becoming more important. The latest National Nutrition Survey shows that more than half of Filipino adults are already overweight or obese. Other studies also indicate that many Filipinos have early signs of metabolic syndrome, which includes high blood sugar, increased waist size, and elevated blood pressure.

According to Dr. Luigi Gratton, vice president of the Office of Health and Wellness and chair of the Herbalife Nutrition Advisory Board, when most people hear the word "metabolism," they think of burning calories or losing weight.

"While weight loss can be a welcome benefit of a healthy metabolism, keeping it in balance affects how our bodies function, how we feel, and how well we age," he said.

Everyday stress, processed foods, and long hours spent sitting, whether in traffic or at the office, can slowly throw metabolism off track.

"Chronic stress elevates cortisol and promotes fat storage," said Gratton. "Highly processed foods, often high in added sugars and low in fiber, impair appetite control, gut health, and insulin sensitivity. And long hours of sitting red"ce m"scle activityL which slows metabolic rate and leads to energy imbalances in the body."

The good news is that small, intentional shifts in daily habits can make a big difference. By consistently fueling the body with nutrient-dense foods, staying active, and prioritizing restorative sleep, it becomes possible to restore natural metabolic flexibility and support long-term wellness.

To stay healthy through the holiday rush, Gratton shared three simple ways to boost metabolism.

1. Balance the plate. What goes on the plate lays the foundation for metabolic health. Nutrition influences key metabolic processes like blood sugar control, fat metabolism, gut function, hormone regulation, and inflammation.

To support these processes, prioritize lean protein to build and maintain muscle mass, and include fiber-rich, nutrient-dense foods to promote gut health, satiety, and blood sugar balance. Certain botanicals have also shown promise in supporting metabolic function, including polyphenols found in citrus fruits like oranges, lemons, and grapefruits, and capsicum, which is present in chili peppers and bell peppers.

2. Make movement a habit. physical activity helps regulate blood sugar and energy use, enhances insulin sensitivity, and helps maintain muscle mass, which is essential for metabolic function. Even with packed Christmas schedules, staying active does not have to mean a complete workout. Walk between errands, dance at the party, or take the stairs when possible. Every bit of movement counts.

3. Prioritize rest and recovery. Sleep and recovery are often overlooked, yet they are essential for regulating metabolic processes. During sleep, the body restores essential metabolic drivers that influence weight, energy, and appetite. Quality sleep improves insulin sensitivity, helps regulate hunger hormones like leptin (which signals fullness) and ghrelin (which stimulates hunger), and lowers cortisol, the stress hormone that can disrupt metabolism.

Simple habits such as limiting screen time before bed, maintaining a consistent sleep schedule, aiming for seven to nine hours of uninterrupted sleep, and incorporating calming nighttime routines can improve sleep quality and support overall metabolic resilience.

Metabolic health is the foundation of feeling one's best, not only during the holidays but for years to come.

"It is built through small, consistent shifts that support the body's natural ability to function at its best," said Gratton. "Balanced nutrition, regular movement, and restorative sleep work together to improve energy, digestion, weight regulation, mood and long-term vitality."

For Filipinos celebrating the season, that can mean being mindful of portions, staying active when possible and taking time to rest between festivities.

To learn more abo"t metabolic health and how to support it through healthy lifestyle changes, watch Herbalife's "The Breakdown Mini-Series" on YouTube.