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How to prepare for a healthy holiday season

Don’t get sick over Christmas

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Time flies so fast, and Christmas is just around the corner. While it is a season to be merry, many have fallen ill during this season in the past. The season will get busier as the social calendar gets filled up with festive activities in addition to work deadlines and other responsibilities before the holidays finally kick in. After which, most of us can take a break. Unfortunately, before that Christmas break, we tend to drive ourselves to exhaustion only to end up sick in bed, unable to enjoy Christmas or the New Year with our loved ones. Do not allow yourself to miss being merry this Christmas season by staying healthy throughout the holidays. Staying healthy and preventing illnesses, however, takes time and effort. Are you willing to do something about it? Here are the most practical ways to ensure optimum health and wellbeing this time of the year.

Learn to say no like a pro. Prioritize activities and events that you genuinely and sincerely want to be part of and don’t just feel obliged to attend. You do not need to be present at all the events that you are invited to at the expense of your sleep and energy. Choose the ones that matter to you. Simply decline other invitations even without the burden of having to explain yourself over. It would be best to plan your schedule, including rest or downtime in between busy days. One of the reasons why we get sick during the busy season is due to a compromised immune system. Lack of quality sleep and rest will weaken your immune defenses. This makes you more prone to infections like the common cold or flu.

Intentionally make and consume fresh produce from vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. You will need all the vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and phytochemicals or plant nutrients that your immune system needs to fight oxid at ive stress caused by the demands of the busy sea son on your mind and body, as well as the type of food (pro-inflam mat ory) that one typ ic ally indulges in dur - ing the festivities. We normally don’t find many veget ables and fresh fruits at parties. There fore, prepare fresh smoothies and vegetable dishes at home. For instance, if you’re having a dinner party, make sure your breakfast and lunch at home have adequate vegetables and fruits. Someone asked me, “Who eats vegetables for breakfast?” I answered, “Me and many others who want to be healthy.” You can have a vegetable omelette, a scrambled tofu, a fruit and vegetable smoothie, some salad to go with your morning sandwich, cooked vegetables on your congee, or lugaw instead of meat. You can be creative in preparing your meals. It is a matter of making healthy decisions and being intentional about it.

One of the things that is often neglected by many is proper hydration. Regularly drinking water will boost your

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immunity. Unfortunately, something so basic yet highly important in health isn't given much thought. We'd rather just get sick and take medications instead of putting all our efforts into prevention. Staying well hydrated will also help stabilize cholesterol, triglycerides, and blood glucose levels. Water is not
a substitute for medications if you're taking them. Water, however, can help a lot in terms of health benefits. Many still have problems with diabetes, hyperlipidemia, blood pressure, and more, even when taking medications. All because they fail to drink adequate water and regularly consume adequate fresh produce. Do not wait until your throat is parched. When you feel thirsty, you are already likely to be dehydrated. Mindfully carry a water bottle with you and take gulps, not just sips, throughout the day. Drink water during meals instead of sugary beverages.
Gaining body fat and excess weight is easy due to the intake of calorie-laden food served during festivities. Aside from portion control, it will do you great benefit to be physically active. If your schedule is busier and full exercises are not your priority (which they should also be), intentionally do cycles of walking throughout the day. Brisk walk for 10 to 15 minutes before meals inside your house or office, walk in place, stand up, take the stairs, whatever it takes, just keep moving. Standing is also helpful. If you're watching your favorite show, walk in place or stand for at least 30 minutes. Just get moving.
If you have a medical condition, it is prudent to have a medical check-up this month. Know your health status, what medicines need to be taken, and be disciplined. It's better to be prepared than sorry. Heart attacks and other illnesses show an increase in incidence during the holidays. Be wise.
Lastly, don't be too hard on yourself. Listen to your body. Even if you do not manage to tick everything on your list, it is okay. If you cannot buy presents for everyone, that does not make you less of a person. It will surely feel uncomfortable or awkward, especially if you are so used to accomplishing things on your Christmas list. However, if it takes its toll on your health, it is not worth it. Simply apologize that you were unable to get something for that person. Do not allow yourself to be pressured. Christmas is about God's gift to us... The salvation that Jesus freely gave us. Anything beyond that is a bonus. Gifts and all. Do not compromise your health, energy, time, and mental well-being just to keep up appearances this season.
Have a happy, healthy holiday season!