

Staying Healthy During the Holidays

As soon as we feel the crisp hints of fall, we start craving pumpkin-spiced lattes, pumpkin bread, pumpkin pie, roasted turkey, and all things fall. Then, with the first hint of winter, our cravings turn to hot chocolate, egg nog, and all the fabulous Christmas treats we look forward to every year.

The holidays seem to be synonymous with food, and it is everywhere. People who don't cook all year take to the kitchen to bake cookies and muffins, and they are so kind to bring them to work to share. Trying to diet when there is always a sweet new treat to sample seems impossible. Have no fear: This is not a pitch about eating whatever you want and still losing weight because that would be a Christmas miracle. This guide is to help you find balance and enjoy the holidays while feeling good about yourself.

The backlash effect

An all-or-nothing mindset sets a trap for over-indulgence later. For example, if you look forward to the Thanksgiving meal all year, then deprive yourself of it, at some point, you will tell yourself that you didn't eat at Thanksgiving, so now you can eat the chips, and the cookies, and you can reward yourself with a big meal. You missed out on something you looked forward to and overindulged in unhealthy food for compensation. There is a way for you to stay off the deprivation vs. overindulgence pendulum.

Approach the holidays with intent

As we near the holidays, note the foods and traditions you've been looking forward to. If Thanksgiving is the only time you have pumpkin pie piled high with whip cream, then don't deny yourself. Instead, eat smaller portions of the sweet potato casserole that you only eat so you don't hurt grandma's feelings. When you eat the pumpkin pie you've been looking forward to, be present, slow down, and enjoy it.

Mindful of why it matters

We associate comfort and happy memories with food, so allow yourself to enjoy them – guilt-free. The chocolate-covered marshmallow Santa and candy canes always taste better out of the stocking on Christmas morning. When you permit yourself to enjoy the treats and traditions you look forward to, you allow yourself to enjoy them fully. This is a healthy indulgence – the kind that doesn't come with backlash. You won't be tainted with guilt when you balance holiday treats with healthy eating and small portions.

It isn't all about the food

The holidays are busy, and we don't want to miss a minute, so keeping our exercise routine intact can be challenging. The top priority is to keep moving; any movement keeps our body feeling good. Yes, those hours we spend shopping, walking around the mall, and even standing in line count. Playing with the kids and grandkids is excellent exercise. They have a wonderful way of keeping us moving without realizing how much time has passed. Staying active during the holidays isn't just important for our diet; it helps us balance the stress of the holidays.

The merriment of movement

Our bodies are designed to be active. Sitting for long hours is linked to back pain, hypertension, depression, and even cancer. The holidays can be a stressful time for many reasons. We are adding a list to our already long to-do list, juggling family obligations, and making up for vacation time at work. If we skip exercise to free up time in our calendar, we are trading one problem for a bigger one. Exercise reduces stress and the effects of stress. Getting our heart rate up with healthy movement releases endorphins, our brain's natural feel-good drug. Exercise sheds tension and improves our mood, which makes us better able to cope with stress and the busyness of the holidays.

Hanging on to habits

It is tough to create a good habit and oh so easy to break it. Don't let the holidays destroy your personal training routine. You may have to switch your days around or go at different times. You may even have to see a different trainer at a time or two. Luckily, all the personal trainers at our facility are well-trained and make exercise fun. While it might make you nervous to see someone new, it is better than getting out of the habit of going altogether. Keeping your good habits during the holidays will help you feel good so you can enjoy your holiday to the fullest.

Nebraska's weekly holiday

Since this is Nebraska, many of us watch the game every Saturday. There is nothing wrong with enjoying a football game with friends and family, even though it often means four or more hours sitting on the couch. We need to balance this time with exercise. Taking a walk before the game or moving our personal training session to a different day will keep us in shape during the all-important Nebraska football season.

Your health is the most important gift

Picture yourself after the holidays are over – you kept to your diet and didn't feel deprived. You stayed on track with your personal trainer and kept yourself moving. You feel confident and healthy. – Doesn't that feel good? This is the gift to yourself for balancing your health with the holidays. Keep that feeling at the forefront of your mind and take on the holidays with confidence and joy.

At our facility, we aim to be a trusted partner in your health. Our personal trainers work closely with clients to help them reach their individual goals. With a small group and private personalized training, we have everything you need to create a successful experience. Call us for a free consultation, and let us help you enjoy the holiday season.