

FREEZE! CHALLENGE

Exercise and the Holidays

Exercise can relieve stress, restore energy, lift your spirits, reduce depression and anxiety, and even help you get a good night's rest. All of these benefits are important, especially at this busy time of year. Here are some ways to be or stay active.

Get up and out

- **Shovel snow.** This is a good cardiovascular workout and something that needs to be done anyway. Use proper shoveling techniques so you don't hurt your back. And if you're feeling generous, shovel your neighbor's sidewalk too!
- **Walk and shop.** Burn some bonus calories while you shop for gifts! Walk the perimeter of the mall before and after you do your shopping. You're already there and can work out your arms if you're carrying heavy bags.
- **Make the time you spend with your kids active time.** Build a snowman, go sledding, or go to a state park and walk through the snowy landscape. These are great ways to snap some memorable pictures, too!

Make the most of the indoors

- **Play games.** Join others in a Wii game or play hide-and-seek with your kids. You'll be surprised at the amount of moving that you do!
- **Deck the halls.** Hanging lights, wrapping gifts, and putting up a tree are all great ways to keep moving while indoors. Play some lively music and you may just find yourself dancing!

A closer look

You'd be surprised to see how many calories you burn doing everyday activities! Take a look at the chart below for calorie burning estimates for one hour of that particular activity.

Decorating	178	Wrapping gifts	107
Caroling	107	Cleaning house	250
Playing the piano	178	Grocery shopping	250
Dancing	321	Baking goodies	179
Mingling	143	Chopping wood	428
Dressing up	178	Shoveling snow	428
Shopping	164	Making snow angels	214

Values attained from the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM)

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Make sure to stay safe if you're heading outdoors during the cold weather. Check out these winter safety tips!

<http://medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=153387>



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Cooking in a Healthy Way

Holiday treats can pack a high-calorie punch! As you make your family's special treats, think about ways to reduce the fat and calories you're putting in them, as well as make sure that your portion sizes are what they should be.

Start new traditions

- **It's never too early to start a new tradition.** Instead of making eggnog or hot chocolate this year, make something healthier, like spiced apple cider*!
- **Dessert doesn't have to be sinful.** Try spiced baked apples or vanilla roasted pears**. When in doubt, chocolate-dipped strawberries or pretzels*** will satisfy your sweet tooth and is a better option than cookies, brownies, or cakes.

Celebration preparation

- Eat a healthy snack before you go to an event where food will be served.
- Keep a glass of water with you. Water will keep you full and not leave you empty-handed.
- Wear form-fitting clothes instead of a large sweater or loose pants. You'll be able to feel yourself getting full quicker and are less likely to overeat.

Portion distortion

- Some holiday favorites don't work well with low-fat ingredients. Instead, try to scale back on the portion sizes themselves. Cheesecake is a great example—serve cheesecake bites instead of large slices.
- If you're faced with a buffet of delicious treats, try a bite of each and call it a day. It might be tempting to overload, but you're not denying yourself, just setting limits.
- Choose a smaller plate when possible. Going with an appetizer plate instead of a dinner plate will give you less space to fill, but you'll have plenty to eat.

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Here are some great – and healthy – holiday recipes:

***Spiced apple cider**
www.thekitchn.com/recipe-spiced-a-32035

****Poached pears**
www.marthastewart.com/341355/poached-pears

*****Chocolate-dipped strawberries and pretzels**
www.eatingwell.com/recipes_menus/recipe_slideshows/chocolate_covered_recipes_chocolate_dipped_recipes



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Stress and the Holidays

Does the thought of cooking a holiday turkey give you heart palpitations? You're not alone. Holidays bring out the stress — both good and bad. Here are some ways to help cope with hectic times in your life.

Keep it simple and set priorities

Keeping things simple and setting priorities can make the holidays a little easier.

- Learn how to ask for help from your family so you can enjoy the holidays instead of being panicked.
- Remember that you can say 'No' to social invitations—especially if you know that a crowded schedule stresses you out.
- Leave parties 30 minutes earlier than you normally would so you can maintain a healthy sleeping pattern.

Plan ahead and stick with a budget

You can't enjoy the holidays if you're concerned about how you'll pay the bills when it's over. Have an idea of what you'd like to give friends and family so you can take advantage of sales throughout the year and spread the financial burden.

Volunteer

It's amazing what helping others can do to lift your spirits. You might also find this the best stress reducer of all. Consider these ways of contributing to your community this season:

- Devote some of your time to a local organization of your choice.
- Donate gifts to needy families.
- Collect canned goods.
- Visit a local children's hospital.

Get your family involved! Starting a volunteer tradition with your family can bring you joy and thankfulness for years to come.

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Did you know that rates of depression increase during the holidays? Check out this article by the Mayo Clinic to learn some key ways to relieve stress, anxiety, and depression during the holiday season.

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/stress/MH00030>



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Eating on the Run

The holiday season is busy and often there isn't time to plan, cook, sit down, and have a meal. Here are some tips to healthy eating when you're on-the-run.

Use a crock pot

Using a crock pot allows you to put the meal on at the beginning of the day and have it ready when you come home. Visit <http://greatist.com/health/healthy-crock-pot-recipes> for a comprehensive list of tried and true recipes.

Health tip: Avoid recipes that use cream-based soups and stick to water, chicken stock, or tomato-based soups and stews.

Keep healthy staples on-hand

Keeping healthy staples on-hand allows you to quickly throw something together. Having an easy meal at home is healthier—and cheaper—than stopping for carry-out on the way home. Be sure to add fresh produce to your meal to fit in your veggies! Healthy staples include basic food items, such as:

- Pasta
- Rice
- Frozen and canned vegetables
- Potatoes
- Beans
- Packaged greens

Be smart eating out

- Choose grilled items instead of fried.
- Avoid sauces or ask for them on the side.
- Share your meal or put half of your dinner in a to-go box at the beginning of the meal.
- If you know where you're eating ahead of time, take a few minutes to find the menu online and see if there's nutritional information available or a 'lite' menu.

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Check out *Eat This, Not That*, the best-selling book written by David Zinczenko and Matt Goulding. It provides suggestions for meals at common establishments like Wendy's or Applebee's and goes into detail about substitutions you can make for food at work and home, like vending machine choices and grocery store picks.



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Getting Your Daily ZZZ's

Are you getting the recommended amount of sleep each night? Sleep experts recommend 7-8 hours for most adults, but many Americans get much less sleep than what's recommended. Here are a few tips to help you improve your quality of sleep each night.

Get regular exercise

Regular exercise usually makes it easier to fall asleep and sleep better. You don't have to be a star athlete to reap the benefits—as little as 20 to 30 minutes of activity helps.

Watch what you eat and drink

- Alcohol will reduce your overall quality of sleep.
- Caffeine can cause sleeping problems even 10-12 hours after drinking it!
- Avoid eating a big meal before bed or anything that you know will upset your stomach—save those spicy meals for lunch.

Make a winding down routine

Try to create a habit of winding down before bed and keep it every night.

Ideas for a winding down routine:

- Read a book for 20 minutes.
- Take a warm bath.
- Do some stretches to relax the muscles.

Avoid these habits before bed:

- Caffeinated beverages after 2pm.
- Exercising within 2 hours of your bed time.
- Watching TV or browsing your laptop or phone from bed. The light in these screens makes it harder to fall asleep, even after they've been turned off.

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Struggling to unwind at bedtime? Sometimes soothing music or sounds can help your mind and body relax. Visit www.soundsleeping.com to create your own unique blend of sounds to help you fall asleep!



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Getting Started with Weight Loss

Weight loss is a long-term strategy. All too often, losing weight is a temporary win followed by a steady regain of lost weight. Here are three ways to succeed in the battle of the bulge.

Exercise and weight training

It's nothing new, and you might not want to hear it, but exercise is probably the most important predictor of whether you will succeed at long-term weight loss. Strive for a minimum of five 30-minute sessions per week. While aerobic activity can help burn calories, muscle is where it's at when it comes to giving your metabolism a significant daily boost. The more muscle tissue you have, the more calories you will burn.

Stay focused on being healthy, not becoming thin

Many people become more successful at long-term weight loss when their motivation changes from wanting to be thinner to wanting to be healthier. Change your mind-set to think about selecting foods that will help your body's health rather than worrying about foods that will affect your body's weight.

Manage your expectations

Set a goal for yourself that is realistic—aim for 1-2 lbs of weight loss per week as a maximum. If you weigh yourself and the scale hasn't budged, resolve to work harder and switch your routine the next week instead of giving up. The effort will pay off, even if it is slow!

STAY CONNECTED!

Start your long-term weight loss strategy with the free online calorie counter and diet plan, My Fitness Pal. Track what you're consuming each day and calculate the number of calories in your food. Visit www.myfitnesspal.com for more information on how to get started!



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Reading Food Labels

Reading food labels can help you choose foods that make up a healthful diet. Doing this can help reduce risk factors for some diseases such as heart disease, heart attack, and stroke. For example, a diet high in saturated fat and cholesterol can raise blood cholesterol, which is a risk factor for heart disease. Food labels can also help you determine which foods will keep you full longer and satisfy your cravings.

Understanding the key words and health claims on product labels (as defined by the government) can help you make more healthy decisions.

Common key words

Fat Free	Less than 0.5 grams of fat per serving
Low Fat	3 grams of fat (or less) per serving
Lean	Less than 10 grams of fat, 4.5 grams of saturated fat, and no more than 95 milligrams of cholesterol per serving
Light (Lite)	$\frac{1}{3}$ less calories or no more than $\frac{1}{2}$ the fat of the higher-calorie, higherfat version; or no more than $\frac{1}{2}$ the sodium of the higher-sodium version
Cholesterol Free	Less than 2 milligrams of cholesterol and 2 grams (or less) of saturated fat per serving

Health claim

Heart Disease and Fats
Blood Pressure and Sodium
Heart Disease

What it means

Low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol
Low in sodium
A fruit, vegetable, or grain product low in saturated fat and cholesterol that contains at least 0.6 grams soluble fiber without fortification per serving

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Check out the Mayo Clinic's interactive nutrition label tool to learn more about which nutrients you should increase or limit:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/nutrition-facts/NU00293>



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Add More Fruits & Vegetables

If you're not eating at least two pieces of fruit and five servings of vegetables each day, now is the time to start. Although there's no single miracle food to prevent or cure cancer, scientists know fruits and vegetables have a protective effect against this and other diseases. Fruits and vegetables don't just contain vitamins and minerals, but also many other nutrients which are important for good health that you won't find in a pill.

Be adventurous

Try experimenting with vegetables you've never eaten before—or use familiar vegetables in unfamiliar ways.

- Try a little mashed avocado instead of butter or margarine as a spread on bread—it has less fat and more nutrients, as well as more flavor.
- Try grating vegetables such as carrots, zucchini, beets, or red cabbage and add them to salads or sandwiches.

Add extra fruit or vegetables to meals

Many traditional cuisines base dishes on vegetables with just a little meat, poultry, or fish—this is a good habit to keep!

- Remember that the more colors you have on your plate, the healthier the meal.
- Many recipes—like tacos, soups, stews, casseroles, and egg dishes—are a great way to use produce before it goes bad, even if the recipe doesn't call for it.
- Adding bananas, kiwi, or dried fruit to a breakfast cereal is an easy way to make that meal healthier.

Create good family habits

Get your family into the habit of snacking on fruits and vegetables.

- Starting this habit when children are young will make it easier for them to continue it as they become adults.
- Ask your children to help you prepare fruits and vegetables to get them excited about being healthy.
- Some kid-friendly fruits and vegetables include berries, sliced apples, oranges, or pears, baby carrots and sugar snap peas.

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Did you know that vegetables that are in season have more dense nutrients and taste better? There's a reason tomatoes in the grocery store in December are much lighter than they are in August. Eat as many of your fruits and veggies when they're in season and find out how great they can really taste! Here's a guide to help you figure out what's in season:

<http://www.cookinglight.com/food/in-season/seasonal-recipes-00400000058278/>

