

**Do More Than Survive
the Holiday Season -
Enjoy It!**

Ask the Health Coach

Fresh & Healthy Recipe

**Sip, Sit and Savor to
Minimize Holiday
Weight Gain**

Do More Than Survive the Holiday Season – Enjoy It!

The hustle and bustle of the holiday season is upon us! Are you ready for the whirlwind of shopping, parties, activities and more? Instead of feeling excited and happy during this time of year, some of us feel stressed and overwhelmed. If this sounds like you, make a vow to reduce stress and really enjoy this special time with friends and family.

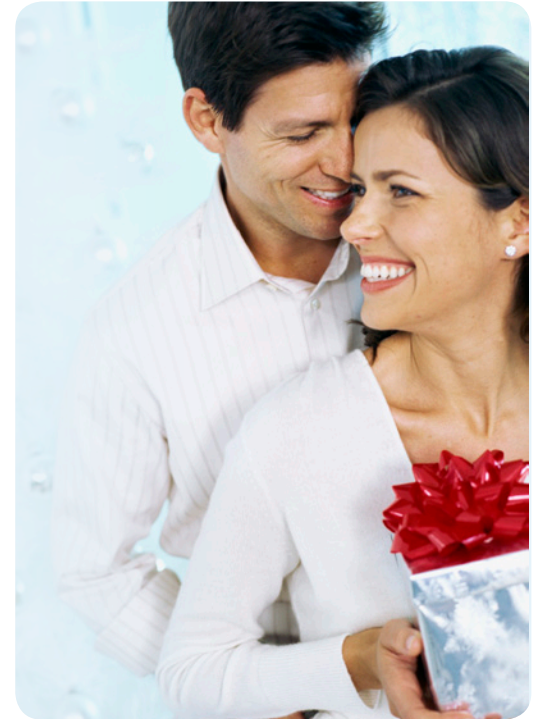
What causes holiday stress?

If you're going to make a change this holiday season, it helps to recognize some common holiday stressors. Most stress comes from being overbooked, overindulged, overdosed and/or depressed.

Overbooked. Sometimes we can have too much of a good thing. Between the office parties, neighborhood pot-lucks, family get-togethers and dinner parties with friends – not to mention school pageants, ceremonies and presents – you end up exhausted and irritable instead of rested and rejuvenated.

Overindulged. An over abundance of parties and gift-giving occasions lead many people to eat, drink and be merry ... to an excess. The temptation to overindulge in spending, rich foods or alcohol can cause stress from consequences (debt, weight gain, memories of embarrassing behavior, etc.) that can linger long after the season is over.

Overdosed. The holiday season is a time when families gather. While this can be wonderful, even the closest families can overdose on togetherness when extended visits go too long. And when families don't get along, just the thought of one day together can be stressful!



Depressed. For some of us who live far away from our families, or don't have a family to share the holidays with, loneliness can make the season a painful event.

While some stress is necessary for our survival and zest for life, too much stress has a negative impact on our health, both mental and physical. Here are a few stress relieving tips to help you not just survive the holiday season, but enjoy every minute of it!

- **Plan your holiday.** See how realistic your plans are by writing them down on paper. Before you get overwhelmed with too many activities, select a few favorites and really enjoy them, and skip the rest.
- **Keep up with good habits.** Stay active by taking a 10 minute walk, dancing or riding your bike. Refuel your sense of well being by carving out time for a long bath or a power nap. Make it non-negotiable.

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- **Practice moderation.** Enjoy the decadent tastes of the season, within limits. Take small samples of the foods you really like and load up on fruits and veggies. If you drink alcohol, plan how many drinks you will have ahead of time, and stick to it.
- **Make a budget.** Take time to list your holiday expenses including travel, food, cards, postage and gifts. Tweak your list until the items fit within the budget. If money is tight, consider making homemade gifts (go online for great ideas) or giving coupons for services like babysitting, folding the laundry, mowing the lawn or washing a car.
- **Enjoy the moment.** Take a few deep, cleansing breaths and reduce your level of negative stress in a matter of minutes. Focus your attention on the “here and now” and not on what’s next on your “to do” list.

- **Have a good laugh.** Laughter helps relieve stress, and it connects people. It’s hard to stay stressed when you are laughing.

Most importantly, do the things that bring you happiness, not stress. Sometimes that means re-evaluating family traditions like sending greeting cards, hosting the big holiday meal by yourself or buying gifts for everyone you know. Choose the traditions you love the most and share them with the ones you love.



Resource: Health Dialog



Ask the Health Coach

Q

What is resting metabolic rate and can I change it??

A

Your resting metabolic rate, or Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR), is the amount of energy (calories) your body uses at rest. It accounts for roughly 60 to 75% of the calories your body burns each day.

Your BMR is determined by a number of things, but most importantly the amount of muscle tissue you have. Adding resistance training to your workouts will help you increase muscle mass so your body uses more energy at rest. Higher intensity cardiovascular activities mixed with moderate intensity workouts will also help you maintain a higher metabolism for longer periods of time, thus using more energy.

To determine your estimated caloric needs based on your BMR and current activity level, go to www.acefitness.org/calculators/daily-caloric-needs-calculator. Or, visit a weight loss center which may provide a more accurate BMR.

Resource: acefitness.org

For more information about healthy eating, browse WebMD’s Lifestyle Improvement Program on Nutrition. Log in to MyBlueService from www.bcbsfl.com and look under the **Living Healthy** tab. Select **Lifestyle Improvement Programs from WebMD** then **Nutrition**.

Fresh & Healthy

Recipe of the Month

Wild Rice and Fruit Pilaf

Here's an easy holiday side dish that is good for you.

Ingredients

1 small onion, chopped
 1 celery rib, chopped
 1 small carrot, finely chopped
 1 garlic clove, minced
 1 Tbsp butter
 ¾ cup brown rice, uncooked
 1/3 cup wild rice, uncooked
 1 can (14 ½ ounces) reduced-sodium beef or vegetable broth
 1¼ cups water
 ¾ cup golden raisins and cherries
 1 Tbsp fresh parsley, minced
 ¼ tsp salt
 1/8 tsp dried thyme
 1/8 tsp rubbed sage
 1/8 tsp pepper
 ¼ cup pecans, chopped and toasted

Nutritional analysis:

Calories: 167.4; Total Fat: 1g;
 Cholesterol: 6.1mg; Sodium:
 1,375.2mg; Total Carbs: 33.8g;
 Dietary Fiber: 8.7g; Protein: 9.6g

Directions

In a large saucepan, sauté the onion, celery, carrot and garlic in butter until tender. Add brown rice and wild rice; stir to coat.

Stir in the broth, water, fruit, parsley, salt, thyme, sage and pepper. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 50 to 60 minutes or until liquid is absorbed and rice is tender.

Remove from heat; stir in pecans. Cover and let stand for 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork before serving. Makes 5 servings (¾ cup each)



Looking for delicious, healthy recipes the whole family can enjoy? Check out our Healthy Recipes from WebMD! Simply log in to MyBlueService from www.bcbsfl.com. Look under the **Living Healthy** tab and click on **Healthy Recipes from WebMD**.

Sip, Sit and Savor to Minimize Holiday Weight Gain

The one thing you don't want for Christmas is weight gain! Did you know that some studies estimate that Americans gain, on average, five to 11 pounds during the holiday season? What's more, weight gained during the holidays is very rarely lost. Over time, even a one pound gain adds up to 12 pounds, then 24 pounds, and so on.

No worries though, if you're prepared! First, acknowledge that this is a special, stressful, fun, and challenging time of the year largely defined by gathering and enjoying good food and drink. With anticipated family traditions, favorite recipes and decadent desserts tempting you at every turn, you have to plan now, so you won't be sorry later.

Here are a few helpful tips to keep weight gain out of your holiday plan:

- Eat a healthy snack and drink a glass of water before a gathering to reduce your appetite – and your chances of overeating!
- Think "sip," instead of "gulp." If you enjoy eggnog or a martini, remember these beverages are quite high in calories. Sipping lengthens the time of your enjoyment.
- Eat only what you really want to eat, and savor the first bite or two. The first bites are what your taste buds really appreciate anyway.
- Sit down and enjoy your meal away from the buffet table. On the same note, mingle as far as you can from the food so you're not tempted to graze all evening.
- Bring a fresh fruit salad or vegetable tray to a party to be sure you have healthy choices to accompany the less healthy pleasures.
- Assume the role of photographer at functions. You'll not only capture memories and meet people; the activity is difficult to perform with a plate, or drink, in hand.
- Get moving by using the stairs at every opportunity and parking as far away as you can from your destination. The little things do add up to relieve stress and burn calories.
- Make it a point to get sufficient sleep every night. Fatigue can trigger overeating, and create guilt that drains energy.



The holidays are about giving, sharing and enjoying the company of family and friends. Remember to sit, sip and savor every wonderful moment.

Resources: Livestrong.com and webmd.com