

# Yes, healthy holidays are possible with planning and imagination

By Diane Lindsey

The holiday season is upon us, with lots of celebration, shopping, parties, and...food! Friends and families get together to share happenings of the past year and dreams for the New Year and...eat! And, oh, what we eat! With all the cookies, pies, gravies, sauces, but-  
 tery mashed potatoes, turkey and dressing, the days between Thanksgiving and New Year's can be the most fattening days of the year. And in the hustle and bustle of activities, it can be challenging to find time

to exercise, let alone time for adequate rest to recharge our energy.

But be of good cheer! There are ways to stay on a healthy eating plan and squeeze in exercise even during these busy times. Add in getting enough sleep, and much of the stress goes away, allowing us to enjoy the holidays.

## First, the food

The foods we choose during the holiday season are not necessarily "bad." More often, it's what we do to those foods -

basting and buttering, to cream sauces and cheese spreads, to cakes, cookies, and pies - that turns healthy foods into fat- and sugar-laden dishes with more calories and less nutrition.

A first step would be to cut out some of the fat used in preparing foods. Using low fat chicken or turkey stock can significantly reduce calories and fat grams in dressings and gravies. Instead of whole eggs, use egg substitute, and cooking sprays rather than butter and oil. Sweet potatoes are powerhouses of vitamins and fiber, and don't need to be candied to be delicious. And green beans taste good without a heavy cream sauce and little fried onion rings on top!

Holiday parties and buffets don't have to be caloric extravaganzas. Instead of cheese puffs and smoked wienies, focus on raw veggies and fruit, or shrimp with cocktail sauce.

And before you start loading up your plate at that buffet, look at all your options first. Choose

mostly foods that provide nutritional value, and fill in with small quantities of the more forbidden items. Don't load your plate to the point you can barely lift it; once you've dished the food up, you're more likely to feel obligated to eat it. Remember, you can always go back for more of those tasty shrimp and veggies.

If you must have sweets (and most of us must!) enjoy them in moderation. Save yourself from hundreds of calories and many grams of fat with a gingerbread or sugar cookie instead of cheesecake or pecan pie. Or share a dessert with others; a couple of bites of a rich dessert can satisfy the urge to indulge and you'll feel

so much better afterwards!

## Yes, time to exercise

This is probably not the time of year you'll be spending hours at the spa working out, or out jogging for miles each day. You can, however, sneak exercise into your busy schedule without too much effort. Try these suggestions:

When shopping, park farther from the store entrance and walk briskly to the door. Forget escalators and elevators, and take the stairs. Spend 20-30 minutes vigorously cleaning house. While working on that holiday dinner, do a few biceps curls with that can of green beans before you toss them in the pan. For exercise fun, turn up the music and dance!

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