

# Healthier Holidays

A Guide To Staying Healthy During Your Holidays



Brought to you by: [Family Living Ideas](#)

## Healthy Holidays

The holidays tend to be one of the major seasons for getting sick. The reasons for this are many. While many people blame it on the colder weather, the truth is that during the holiday time we tend to forget about taking care of ourselves. Instead we drink a bit too much, eat too many canapés, cheese balls, and cookies, and we do, because the weather is often less than perfect, tend to stay inside more. Inside, where the germs are flying around, everyone is shaking hands and no one is opening a window to banish the germs. Additionally, the holidays add a significant amount of stress to our already crazy lives and stress does weaken our immune system, which means yep, you guessed it, we get sick.

In this report we're going to examine how to stay healthy during this busy time.

### **Let's talk about stress first!**

The holidays are chock full of expectations and pressures. You have your own personal expectations like a happy holiday for your children and family. If you have to travel to visit family or friends during the holidays then you have the stressors of travel. Not to mention the inherent stress of visiting with family, yours and your extended. I should note here that not all stress is bad stress. Yes, visiting with family can be fantastic and fun and you may certainly look forward to it every year, however it still places a stress on your body that you may not be aware of.

There is of course the financial stress of the holidays. Not everyone can afford their child's entire wish list, the diamond earrings or Rolex watch they want to buy their spouse, nor can they contribute to the abundance of charities that they want to during the holidays.

What about stress related to all of those social obligations around the holidays? Just how many hands can you shake before your smile begins to fade and you just want to go home and curl up on the couch?

### **What does all this stress do to your body?**

Chronic stress can raise your cortisol levels and weaken your immune system. This instantly makes you more susceptible to colds and the flu not to mention more serious problems like heart disease and diabetes. Stress also affects our ability to get a good night's sleep which is extremely important for our body's ability to regenerate and stay strong.

Unfortunately, when we're dealing with holiday stress we also tend to make unhealthy decisions. We don't get as much sleep as we should, we don't exercise, and we don't eat the things that we should. All those cookies, dips, chips, and yummy drinks become more than an occasional indulgence; they can become a habit during the holidays – a habit that makes us sick.

### **So how do you combat all the stress?**

The easiest thing to do is to use stress management tools and techniques during the holidays. Tools like yoga, meditation, and journaling are proven to reduce stress. However those techniques may not be for everyone. Consider taking a daily walk outside. Getting a bit of fresh air, no matter what the weather, is an excellent way to center yourself and release some of the stress.

If getting outside is just not possible, say you live in Alaska and winter means 70 degrees below zero, then join a gym and walk on a treadmill or around a track every day. Exercise is critical to keeping your body, and your immune system strong, and it has been proven that exercise reduces stress.

**Get regular sleep** - Stress can send us to bed for days if we let it. It's a safe place where we can avoid all of the stress that is weighing us down. Set a regular sleep schedule and stick to it. Doctors tell us that we need 8-9 hours of sleep each night. Plan for that. Go to bed at the same time every night and wake up at the same time every night. It will significantly improve your body's ability to handle stress.

**To help ease stress, ask your friends and family for help** - You don't have to do everything yourself. Involve your family in completing household chores including meal preparation.

**Schedule activities** - Planning ahead eliminates much of the stress surrounding the holiday occasions. When something is on your calendar your life is much more predictable and structured.

**Don't be afraid to say no** - You don't have to go to every celebration. You don't have to participate in every holiday activity in your community. You don't have to take every drink or appetizer offered to you. Think about whether you really want to do something before you say yes. If you can't say no or are uncomfortable saying no, then say maybe.

**Plan time off for yourself** - Planning time off for yourself is important all through the year but it is especially important during the holiday season when activities, commitments, and responsibilities can overwhelm. Planning time off for yourself doesn't have to mean a weekend trip to Fiji, though if it does then I'm envious! Time off can mean taking a Sat afternoon to read a good book in front of the fireplace or if you live in my home time off means locking the bathroom door and taking a really long bubble bath and reading the latest magazines. That's my little stress buster – what's yours?

**Shop online** - Shopping stresses me out. I have to admit it. Too many people, not enough sales people willing to help and everything seems so expensive. I've eliminated the stress by shopping online. I set a budget for each family member, get their lists ahead of time, and one evening near the beginning of December I sit down at the computer and go shopping. The great thing is that everyone's presents arrive on my porch – many of them already wrapped and ready to go under the Christmas tree. I realize that for many, holiday shopping is a tradition they're not willing to get rid of, just remember to weigh the pros and cons. If it stresses you out too much, get rid of it!

This can work for holiday cooking too. Not everyone wants to or has time to cook full holiday meals for their gatherings. Thank goodness many markets, standard and organic, now offer full holiday meal catering!

**Change your habits** - If you find that a significant amount of your stress comes from a specific area, assess what you can do to change the situation. For example some people have a tremendous amount of stress around holiday travel. A simple solution would be to decide to stay at home this holiday. Yes, some people may be disappointed however it may be the best

decision for you and your family and you may find that they're willing to travel to see you this holiday season.

**Have fun!** - Laughter is the greatest stress reducer on the planet and the holidays are full of opportunities to laugh. Spend time with friends that make you feel good. Plan a romantic date with your spouse or partner, or take your children out for a day of fun. Children are always good for a laugh. When in doubt, rent your favorite comedy, sit back and enjoy yourself. Life is too short to let a little bit of stress ruin your holidays.



**Beyond reducing your stress, there are many things that you can do to make sure that germs don't stand a fighting chance.**

#### Wash Your Hands.

Do it frequently, and especially before meals. This will keep germs from being passed to your face, so your immune system won't even have to worry about fighting them. You can also use antibacterial hand lotion to serve the same purpose when you're out and about.

### Avoid People Who Are Sick.

It may seem rude but if someone comes to work sick, it is okay to ask them to leave. You have two approaches to handle this. You can say, “Why don’t you go home to take care of yourself?” Or you can say, “Go home. The rest of us don’t want to get your cold.” I’ve had both used on me and neither one offended me – and I went home.

If friends and family are ill, in addition to washing your hands and skipping the kissing, it’s a good idea to spray disinfectant spray on all door handles, light switches, phones and other areas of the house that are frequently touched and germey.

### **Eat well!**

You know that washing your hands, eating plenty of fruits and vegetables, and getting enough sleep is important to a healthy immune system. But did you know that protein plays a valuable role in not only keeping you healthy but helping you to recover from illness?

### Believe it or Not Protein Keeps You Healthy

You eat a hamburger. Your body breaks down that hamburger into amino acids. These amino acids are then re-assembled to make proteins necessary for all cell and biochemical processes in your body. These cell and biochemical processes are necessary to function and to maintain your body. They build cells and tissues, regulate metabolism, regulate hormones, and convert proteins into energy.

Additionally, the protein from that hamburger is directly responsible in the development of antibodies. Antibodies are a protein on the surfaces of your cells that fight bacteria, viruses, parasites, toxins and other foreign substances that can cause illness or infection. When you are exposed to cold and flu viruses, antibodies are what protect your body from being invaded. In the event that you do come down with a cold, protein is responsible for the healing process at the cellular level.

Too little protein in your diet will result in decreased muscle mass, fatigue, a decreased ability to heal, and an increased susceptibility to infection and illness.

## How Much Protein Do You Need?

The opinion varies on this however the World Health Organization recommends .45 grams of protein per kilogram of ideal body weight. If your ideal body weight is 120 pounds and you have an average activity level, then you should consume approximately 45 grams of protein a day.

A female's ideal body weight is calculated by adding 100 pounds for the first 60 inches in height and 5 pounds for each additional inch over 60 inches. A 65 inch woman's ideal weight would then be 125. A man's ideal body weight is calculated by 106 pounds for 60 inches and an additional 6 pounds for each additional inch meaning that a 65 inch man should have an ideal weight of 136.

Just to give you an idea of how easy it is to consume 45g of protein, that hamburger you ate has approximately 7 grams of protein per ounce which means that a quarter pound hamburger has 28 grams. The bun likely has 8 grams and if you add a slice of cheese, 8 grams, and lettuce, onion, and tomato, you're at a total of 46 grams. As you can see, most people are likely to easily meet or exceed their daily protein requirements.

In order to arm yourself against the increasing abundance of germs during cold and flu season, consume healthy proteins like soy, grains, nuts, and lean meats in moderate quantities. And remember, as you increase your activity level, increase your protein intake. Forgetting to do so, will likely result in a lack of energy and mental focus, sugar cravings, and frequent colds or sore throats.

## **Take your vitamins!**

### **The power of vitamin B**

Did you know that vitamin B is actually a collection of eight water-soluble vitamins that often occur together in nature? It's true.

The 8 vitamins that comprise B complex are:

- Vitamin B<sub>1</sub>, (Thiamine)
- Vitamin B<sub>2</sub>, (Riboflavin)
- Vitamin B<sub>3</sub>, (Niacin)
- Vitamin B<sub>5</sub>, (Pantothenic acid)
- Vitamin B<sub>6</sub>, (Pyridoxine and Pyridoxamine)
- Vitamin B<sub>7</sub>, (Biotin)
- Vitamin B<sub>9</sub>, (Folic acid)
- Vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, (Cyanocobalam Thiaminein)

Working together, these vitamins deliver a power punch to your workouts and your overall health. B complex vitamins affect your metabolism. They help your body develop and maintain healthy skin and muscle tone and promote optimal cell growth. B complex vitamins are also play an important role in your immune and nervous system.



Vitamin B occurs naturally in many foods, including whole and enriched grains, dark green vegetables, nuts, and many animal and dairy products. However, they are not stored sufficiently in the body and must be consumed daily. This need for daily consumption can be difficult for many people with fast-paced lives and little time for complete daily nutrition.

This need has led many doctors to recommend supplementation

**Vitamin B Means More Energy.** Vitamin B<sub>12</sub> is strongly believed, to be an energy booster. At one time B<sub>12</sub> was even prescribed to adults with chronic fatigue and showed positive results.

**Vitamin B Means More Essential Nutrients From Other Foods.** B<sub>12</sub> helps metabolize iron, carbohydrates, and fats. It is necessary for the digestion and absorption of other nutrients from food. It also aids your body in the use of proteins, carbs, and fats for energy.

**Vitamin B Means Healthier Muscles.** B vitamins are used during the production and repair of your cells, including red blood cells. Specifically, B<sub>12</sub> plays an important role in the formation of your red blood cells, which in turn carry oxygen to your muscles making them move more effectively and efficiently. This creates less stress on your body and allows it to perform optimally.

### Don't forget Vitamin C and E

Antioxidants are powerful nutrients. They are essential to protect your cells from free radical damage. Antioxidants may slow down, prevent, and possibly reverse certain diseases that result from cellular damage.

It is theorized that a diet rich in antioxidants may reduce and even prevent diseases like macular degeneration, Alzheimer's, and even cancer. It is also widely believed that an antioxidant rich diet can strengthen your immune system.

Vitamin E has been shown to reduce the signs of oxidative damage to cells, speed the removal of lactic acid buildup, increase the supply of oxygen to muscles, and decrease the healing time of wounds and muscle damage.

A few studies performed at altitude have suggested that vitamin E is beneficial in this environment. Studies have shown that mountain climbers supplemented with vitamin E formed fewer free radicals than the placebo group.

The supplemented climbers also had enhanced performance. These results are likely due to the ability of vitamin E to restore red blood cell deformity that is shown at high altitude. This in turn allows for better oxygen delivery as the RBC can flow more easily through the arterial tree.

While Vitamin E is found in egg yolks, dark leafy vegetables, and nuts and seeds, it is difficult to obtain in adequate amounts and supplementation is often recommended.

Also water-soluble, Vitamin C needs to be consumed every day for optimal benefit. Vitamin C is critical for the synthesis of protein and collagen, and it is also a powerful antioxidant like Vitamin E and it protects your cells from free-radical damage. Vitamin C also helps recycle vitamin E.

Researchers at the Linus Pauling Institute at Oregon State University recently published study results indicating that vitamin C and E supplementation for six weeks prior to racing completely prevented the increase in lipid oxidation typical in ultra marathon runners.

#### Two Benefits Of Antioxidant Rich Diets

- Keep your immune system functioning optimally -- Vitamin C promotes a healthy immune system and may help to prevent the dip in immune function that may occur right after exercise.

#### Where To Find Vitamins C and E

Good sources of vitamin C include; citrus, tomatoes, and potatoes. Other foods that are rich in C are papaya, broccoli, strawberries, spinach, melons, kiwifruit, cranberries and red peppers.

The most abundant sources of vitamin E are vegetable oils such as palm oil, sunflower, grapeseed oil, corn, and olive oil. Other sources of vitamin E are whole grains, fish, peanut butter, and some green leafy vegetables.

There have been many studies on the benefits of antioxidants, yet it can be difficult to get all that your body needs each and every day – particularly if you're an active person that may need more than the RDA. This is why supplementation can be helpful.

So I repeat, take your vitamins. Conclusion

A happy, healthy holiday season is right around the corner. Take time to care for yourself, reduce stress, practice good germ free habits, and even if you are able to maintain a well balanced diet during the holidays, take your vitamins. They'll help protect you against all of the other people walking around your world that are sick and not doing as good of a job caring for themselves as you are.

You'll also help to ensure that your family stays healthy too!

