

Quarterly Wellness Editorial

Enjoy the Holidays without Extra Pounds

Tis the Season...but for what? It is that time of year again. Going shopping, holiday parties, loads of festive foods...and unfortunately for many also a time of unwanted weight gain.

Most people just shrug it off to the "holidays" and assume that it will be OK once they make their New Years Resolution to lose it. How many really do though?

What is the cost of adding up a few pounds here and a few pounds there year after year? Why wait till the New Years to make a resolution to stay healthy and lean?

You Can Lose Weight Even During the Holidays

Believe it or not it is possible to lose pounds and still have a social life in the process. No need to hide in the corner at a party and eat celery sticks.

So I put together my top 5 essential tips and strategies to not let the holidays also mean going up a size in your jeans. Here are ways to survive the holiday's and look great doing it!

Tip: Don't show up at parties too hungry

Ever show up and see all the deserts and food out on the table and just want to dive in and eat it all up? Well your number one enemy at the holiday party is going to be hunger pangs and sugary cravings.

Eating More than Normal

If you haven't eaten in a while and show up with a growling stomach, then you are going to have a tough time controlling the amount of food you probably want to eat. Now if all that was around was fruits, vegetables and some meats you probably wouldn't have an issue. But lets be realistic. There are going to be plenty of heavy sauces and deserts in easy arms reach. All in all there are going to be high calorie sources easily available which can mean, an overload on calories.

Craving the Wrong Things

Also if you are showing up in a state of low blood sugar, your body is going to crave more sugar (as it wants to balance out the blood...not too high, not too low). While I am not going to say that you can not have some dessert, just know that an overload of sugar will quickly turn off any fat burning that was happening and lead to more fat storing (especially if there is an excess of calories).

So it is a good idea to not show up for the holiday parties feeling too hungry, unless you have a strong iron will and can control your cravings and calorie intake.

Tip: Before going out, have a small high protein, moderate fat meal to keep your blood sugar stable and hunger in check. Then you will have better control in what you enjoy eating from that point on.

Tip: Portion Size Does Matter

When we are talking about losing weight everyone has heard about calories and portions. Well it makes sense that the bigger the portions are, the more calories there will be in front of you.

You can enjoy most anything if you really want to, but you have to make sure you do not eat more than you really should.

Many people are on the “SEE-FOOD” diet, that is if they see food in front of them on the plate, they will eat and snack at it all night until it is all gone. So the smaller the portions you have, the less temptation there is to keep eating.

Tip: Start with Proteins

Protein is our friend. We need it to build and maintain strong muscles and we also need it to feel full and satisfied.

Ever just eat a whole bag of some snack loaded with sugar and never feel satisfied? (Hence you ate the whole bag only to have your blood sugar come crashing down an hour later)

Sugar is addicting but protein is filling. Not only will you feel full, not letting you to eat more than you should, but also with protein comes the added bonus

of more energy that body has to use to digest it (more calories you could burn just sitting there!). And BEWARE of protein loaded with sugary sauces!

When in doubt, eat your protein based foods first and get full. You will feel great, have more constant energy levels all night and not regret your choices the next day! Load up on sugar too early and it will only lead to your energy coming crashing down later (with more sugar cravings and excess in calories that will just lead to more fat being stored)

Tip: Watch Those Liquid Calories

One of the deadliest calorie bombs around the holidays comes from sources that most people don't even count, that being what you drink.

Yes sad to say that drinks also count towards putting in the excess calories and shutting down fat burning (from the high sugar intake).

Here is just a few samples of the deadliest drinks during the holidays that may be sneaking up on you. All of the

stats below are based on 1 serving size/cup (8 fl oz or smallest available).

- **Eggnog** - is about 350 calories with @40g of sugar per serving!
- **Hot Apple Cider** - While not too high in calories does pack about a 30g sugar punch!
- **Pumpkin Spice Frappuchino** - will give you 230 calories almost 50g of sugar in the smallest size (with the largest size over 500 calories and 90g of sugar!)
- **Hot Chocolate Drink (from a Coffee Shop)** - can give you about 250 calories and 40g of sugar.

Smarter drink choices are: Water (yeah right you say), red wine (1 glass), hard, clear liquors mixed with water, soda water, on rocks, splash of lime/lemon.

Tip: Be Active Most Days of the Week Throughout the Season

What do you find in common with people who have good health and look great? Chances are they lead an “active” lifestyle along with also eating REAL food like meats, veggies, fruits, healthy fats/oils, nuts/seeds and very little starchy carbohydrates, processed, refined foods and processed vegetable oils.

You don't have to go to the gym to be active, you just have to keep your body moving and don't fall for all the shortcuts and other distractions (watching TV, sitting at the computer) of modern society.

Find a way to keep your body moving whether it is taking a walk with a friend, getting off the office chair and moving around every hour, playing with your kids in the park or going dancing. Find creative activities and hobbies that you can consistently do with yourself or friends. Know that consistency is the key to any fat loss success, and consistency is another word for a lifestyle.

If you enjoy what you do, then you will continue to do it often which is what really matters over the long run.

Also, holiday time stress can be higher with work, shopping, traffic, dealing with relatives, travel or many other factors. High stress means your body will go into a sugar burning mode (as your brain is a big glucose/blood sugar hog). This will only lead to more energy crashes and cravings for sugar.

Finally I just want to say, enjoy the season!!

Take it easy. Don't be in such a rush all time. Smile as you wait in line at the checkout. Enjoy walking around the bigger crowds. Don't be focused on everything that "needs" to be done, and just focus on what you are doing right then and there.

If you can't relax and enjoy the holiday season, then what is the reason for it all in the first place? If you feel a bit stressed go for a walk or quick workout. But also remember what this time of year is supposed to be about.

Being relaxed and in a better state of mind will also reflect on what choices you make for food and drinks. Don't let your emotions get the best of you and you can have a much more enjoyable time (and look great doing it). I wish you a happy healthy holiday season! Cheers!

This months Wellness Recipe:

Sweet Potatoes are not only great during the holidays but all year round! This superfood is a nutritional all star. Here are 3 reasons why:

1) Sweet potatoes are naturally anti-inflammatory. Chronic inflammation especially in the gut makes us eat more and absorb less nutrition from our food.

Eating foods such as sweet potatoes in place of inflammation causing food such as wheat can give us the energy we need while healing our bodies at the same time.

2) Sweet potatoes are a complex carbohydrate that burn slowly in our system. Filled with fiber, which naturally slows digestion, energy is released gradually into our body and cells.

3) Sweet potatoes are a nutrition-dense, power-packed, superfood. Sweet potatoes contain high amounts of Vitamin E an antioxidant that helps protect our bodies from free radicals. Plus, they contain more than 100% of the RDA for Vitamin A (beta-carotene), helping our vision stay in tip-top shape.

Here's a new way to incorporate more sweet potatoes into your diet:

Sweet Potato Linguine with Brown Butter Sage Sauce

Ingredients

- 1 large sweet potato (about 1 pound), peeled
- 6 sage leaves
- 2 tablespoons real butter (not margarine)
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper

Instructions

With a mandolin or vegetable peeler, slice sweet potatoes lengthwise as thinly as possible. Cut each slice into ¼-inch strips; set aside.

- In a saucepan over medium heat, melt butter. Add sage; cook until crisp. Remove to paper towels to drain.
- Add sweet potato strips to remaining butter in pan. Cook and stir until al dente.
- Crumble 2 reserved sage leaves over sweet potato; stir. Enjoy!

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