



Live Healthy Georgia

Seniors Taking Charge

Holiday Survival Guide 2012

December 2012

By Whitney Bignell, MS, RD, LD

“It’s the most wonderful time of the year!” It is time for the holiday season again – with seemingly endless opportunities for family gatherings and other celebrations. However, many people find it difficult to maintain normal routines during the holiday season. It is also easy to forget the basics of healthy living: eating healthy, being active, getting checked, being smoke-free, and being positive. This year’s holiday survival guide will give you tips to help you stay on track through this holiday season.

Eat Healthy

Cookies, cakes, candy, and all the other treats that go with the holiday season may lead us away from the healthy eating that we’ve done all year. You don’t have to pout about giving up your holiday staples. Making a few small changes lets you have your cake and eat it, too.



- Enjoy a small salad and/or some fruit about an hour before going to a party or gathering. Fruits and vegetables are full of nutrients and fiber, which helps you feel fuller so that you’re less likely to overindulge when you get to the party.
- Drink a glass of water while waiting for other guests to arrive. Water helps you stay hydrated and fills you up so that you’re less likely to feel hungry.

- Select your favorite treat, and savor every bite. Eating slowly, noticing what you’re eating, and intentionally enjoying what you’re eating helps you feel satisfied so that you’re less tempted to empty an entire plate of cookies.

Be Active

Sometimes it seems like every minute of the day is devoted to preparing for the holidays. Who has time to exercise? The good news is that being active 30 minutes each day can be accomplished in three 10-minute sessions. Here are some ways that you can be more active this season:

- Walk around the mall once before starting your holiday shopping.
- Park your car toward the outer section of the parking lot. You’ll also prevent the stress of fighting for an up-front parking space.
- Take a family walk before or after dinner. This time also promotes bonding and sharing experiences with the younger generation.
- Have a dance party after dinner. If the weather outside is frightful, put on some cheerful holiday music and have fun moving and grooving.



Get Checked

Most people try to avoid scheduling doctors' appointments during the holiday season. While you may not be going to the doctor, it's a good time to think about the appointments you should schedule for next year. Create a list of the visits you need to make (i.e., annual physical exam, dental exams, and screenings), and consider scheduling them for next year. The following web site can help you send reminders to yourself.

[My Health Test Reminder](#)

Be Smoke Free

The holidays can be a stressful time. Many former smokers, especially those who have recently quit, may be tempted to buy a pack of cigarettes again. The following tips, from [Quit Guide: Staying Quit](#) on [Smokefree.gov](#), may help you deal with smoking temptation.

- Keep a "craving" journal so that you can see when and where you're tempted to smoke. As you become aware of the situations in which you're likely to smoke, you can develop ways to cope with the urges to light up.
- Manage cravings through practicing relaxation techniques, going to a different space, finding other activities to do (i.e., wash dishes), eating something crunchy like carrots, or chewing gum.
- Stay positive about the process of quitting – it is all about learning.
- Reward yourself for what you have accomplished. Use the money you save from buying cigarettes to purchase something special for yourself.

Be Positive

The holiday season can be both exciting and challenging. Many people are overwhelmed by the endless "to-do" list and feel drained instead of happy during the holidays. Others may be sad because they have lost a loved one the previous year, or the holidays remind them of those who have passed away. The following tips will help you be positive this holiday season.



- Ask for help with your holiday preparations. Involving others allows you to work together, share memories, and prevent being overwhelmed by the tasks.
- Take time for yourself. Go to the movies, or rent a favorite one to watch at home. Read a book that you've had on your shelf for a while.
- Volunteer. Helping others is not only good for them but also good for you. It can prevent loneliness, as well as create special bonds. You don't necessarily have to volunteer at an organized event (i.e., soup kitchen) to enjoy the benefits. Offer to babysit your neighbors' children so that they can go holiday shopping, or contribute your crafting talents to the holiday bazaar.

Have a Safe Holiday Season!

Pictures

- <http://amerrylife.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/HealthyHolidays.jpg>
- <http://www.vromansbookstore.com/files/vromansbookstore/holiday-cookies2.jpg>
- http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_YYQ-0zuN_dg/TRDxme_GRP/AAAAAAAAAfo/8SNvUO998-A/s1600/christmas-shopping-centre.jpg
- http://lh4.ggpht.com/_xGvWzb6dcRA/TOQoXN8v0CI/AAAAAAAAAEuHE/WikdbLJMUGw/christmas-snowman-wallpaper-gif%5B2%5D.jpg