

Carve out some time to stay active this holiday season

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This holiday season, planning ahead can help you establish a workout routine so you can enjoy your favorite holiday treats with less guilt. A sports medicine expert at Baylor College of Medicine says to start now

and offers safety tips to help avoid injury.

"I would encourage everyone to get out and be active, but we want to be sure that you are able to continue to get out and be active after the holidays," said Dr. Theodore Shybut, assistant professor in the Joseph Barnhart Department of Orthopedic Surgery at Baylor.

At this time of year, Shybut said it's common to see injuries in those who may not have been as active throughout the year, but decide to play touch football or jump in for a turkey trot at the last minute with the rest of their family. Injuries also occur in those who are in shape, but are used to controlled, low-impact cardio as opposed to activities like football, basketball or sprinting.

In those who underestimate their level of [activity](#), it is common to see injuries such as sprains and strains. Shybut said that the more birthdays you've had, the more time you need to spend on stretching and conditioning to avoid injuries.

He offers the following tips:

- Focus on a dynamic warmup, which prepares the muscles to move at high intensities and speeds
- If you plan to do a turkey trot, get out and go for a run or run/walk ahead of Thanksgiving week to assess your fitness level
- Cross-train to vary the stresses that your joints are experiencing
- Ease into new activities slowly
- If you've previously had an [injury](#), do some preventative exercises in preparation
- Stretch after the activity and build in recovery workouts to address soreness
- Dress appropriately for unpredictable weather

Alternatives to the popular touch football game and turkey trot include low-impact strength training activities such as a walk or bike ride, yoga and Pilates.

Many people are deterred from working out because they feel they can't devote an hour or 45 minutes, and it can be especially difficult during the busy [holiday season](#). Shybut said that emerging research has shown the cardiovascular benefits of [high intensity interval training](#), which can be a workout that is less than 10 minutes.

"The idea is to get your heart rate up for a short period of time using maximal effort," Shybut said.

These workouts are usually intense calisthenics or power movements for a short duration of time and a short recovery [time](#) in between.

Shybut also suggested looking for [holiday](#) deals at local gyms to help you meet your fitness goals, rather than waiting for the first of the year to get active.

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

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