

Ten ways to indulge and stay healthy this holiday season

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Before the holidays ruin your wellness plan and make you turn as green as the Grinch, try these 10 ways to help you stay on track and keep your festive spirit.

Often we feel if we can't stick to our regular routine, then why bother? As researchers in nutrition and physical activity behaviours, we know that maintaining wellness over the holidays is easier than starting over again in the new year.

Going into the holidays with a plan to overcome adversity (think dessert tray!) is more effective than no plan at all. Indulge, a little, while still feeling good about yourself.

1. To start, cut yourself some slack!

[Exercisers who show self-compassion](#) after an interrupted routine do better at getting back on track with their exercise goals. If you over-indulge at a [holiday party](#), give yourself a break, and plan to regain control the next day.

2. Plan (and make a backup plan)

Planning is key to [healthy eating](#) and [staying active](#). If the great outdoors inspire you, plan a few [outdoor activities](#) each week, but have a few indoor activities as a backup should Mother Nature have plans of her own.

If numerous parties threaten to derail your [healthy eating](#) habits, plan on a small, [protein-rich snack](#) before heading out. It may seem silly to eat *before*, but a pre-party snack will keep you satisfied and less likely to overeat when you're there.

3. Choose wisely at the food table

Using a small-sized plate for snacks may actually [trick your brain into thinking you're eating more](#) and leave you feeling fuller compared to

using a [large plate](#).

If there's only one size of plate available and it's huge, don't despair! Pick four or five foods you'd really like to try, and take the smallest portion necessary to satisfy your cravings.

4. Get creative about exercise

[Be creative](#) about sneaking in some ways to add activity time to your festivities.

Being active doesn't have to mean counting reps at the gym —go sledding and run back up the hill or plan an indoor scavenger hunt if the weather is too cold. Get the whole family involved and off the couch.

5. Stick with a routine

Interruptions to routine make it easy to abandon all good intentions. It's hard to regain healthy behaviours once we've taken a hiatus and enjoyed the good life.

Stick with a [few elements of your routine](#) to make getting back into the swing of things easier after the holidays.

6. Try mindful eating

Eating is enjoyable, but overdoing it can leave us feeling less than cheerful.

To keep your stomach connected with your brain as you eat, try [mindful eating](#) —the practice of being fully present while savouring each bite.

Experiencing [food](#) this way forces you to focus on feelings of fullness and satisfaction, and may even help [control how much you eat](#).

7. Choose activities that feel good

By picking activities and healthy foods that you enjoy, you're more likely to stay active and eat healthy. When you choose activities that make you feel good, you're more likely to come back for more, so even if you do some intense exercise, build in time for a [relaxing cooldown](#)

8. Know what you're drinking

Raising a glass goes hand-in-hand with the holidays, but can quickly sabotage plans for healthy [holiday](#) living. Cocktails often contain hidden calories, can cause us to overeat and make it harder to be active the next day.

To stay on track while enjoying some holiday cheer, familiarize yourself with [actual serving sizes for alcoholic beverages](#), and follow each alcoholic drink with sparkling water or another non-alcoholic beverage.

9. Make your own festive foods

While the holiday season can be a whirlwind, take time to prepare your own foods as much as possible. By DIY-ing meals, you can create [healthy alternatives to holiday favourites](#).

And while you're at it, get the kids involved in whipping up the holiday feast—kids who learn how to cook gain skills [beyond food prep that they carry into adulthood](#).

10. Crank up the music

Music can help motivate you to [persist in and enjoy exercise](#), so crank up the Bony M Christmas tunes while you run on the treadmill —find music you like and you'll find it easier to get moving.

No matter which of the 10 ways you choose to help you on your wellness journey, we wish you a happy, active holiday season with friends and family.

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