

# Family fun can burn off those extra thanksgiving calories

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It's common to find yourself stuffed at some point during Thanksgiving Day festivities, but experts say staying active can help you burn some calories and feel a little less sluggish after the big meal.

Kicking off Thanksgiving Day by participating in a community event like a Turkey Trot can help prepare you for the feast to come, Dr. Stequita Jackson, a [primary care physician](#) at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, said in a college news release.

Jackson recommends eating carbs prior to the run, like fruits and [whole](#)

[grains](#), to provide your body with the fuel it needs for exercise. After your run, the lean meat provided by the Thanksgiving turkey will give your body the protein it needs for recovery.

Backyard games like flag football, soccer and badminton also can help a family burn [calories](#) before or after the holiday feast, Jackson said.

Older and younger family members also might be encouraged to do some exercise that meets their fitness level. For example, elderly folks can focus on gentle stretching and walking, while the youngsters can do some squats, pushups and short sprint races.

"Know your body and know your limitations," Jackson warned. "If you know you have a bad knee, don't do something like jumping jacks that will put a lot of impact on your joints. People who aren't able to play can still participate as cheerleaders or score keepers for the team."

But the best family activity also is one of the most traditional—taking a stroll to walk off all the food you've eaten.

"A walk around the neighborhood can be especially beneficial after the Thanksgiving meal to help with digestion and improve blood sugar levels," Jackson said.

Walking after eating, rather than lying down for a nap, also can help prevent acid reflux, she added.

But, she said, folks shouldn't stress out if they can't get in a walk or workout during a hectic holiday.

"You should never feel guilty about eating," Jackson said. "Try not to overindulge, and remember that balance is key. The goal is to enjoy the meal, but not be so full that you can't move for the rest of the day. If you

can't get a workout in the day of, there's always tomorrow!"

**More information:** The University of California-San Diego has more [tips for a healthy Thanksgiving](#).

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