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Helping You Achieve Health . . . Naturally!

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Good Holiday Eating Habits (and what to do if you over do it)

By: Cathy Cochrane, NNCP
Holistic Nutrition Practitioner

There really is something magical about the holiday season: white snow, Christmas lights twinkling, the spirit of giving at its most heart-warming. Though sometimes, the joy of celebration tips into over-abundance and over-indulgence. It gets hard to keep your healthy eating habits going when every gathering tempts you to fall off the good-eating wagon.

You've made great strides to shift your weight or to keep your inflammation at bay. As much as you can follow magazine advice to drink lots of water, stand far from the buffet table and load your plate with cucumber slices, the reality is that you want to feel free to celebrate with (reasonable) abandon. There's no need to let things slide completely by the wayside, nor is there a need to deprive yourself either.

Here are **5 tips to navigate holiday food with grace and ease**, and without letting the rich offerings get the best of you.

1. Look before you leap.

Starving yourself all day or doing an extra-intense workout in anticipation of extra calories will only have you arrive at the party ravenous. Besides, your blood



sugar will be off, clouding your ability to make wise choices. You'll also be more vulnerable to the effects of alcohol and may be more easily triggered by family drama or office politics.

Feed yourself adequately throughout the day, so there will be no need to dive headlong for the snacks as soon as your coat is off. When you are ready to eat, take time to scout the choices thoroughly rather than load up mindlessly.

2. Go for quality over quantity.

a) There is no doubt that there will be more on offer than usual: larger amounts, lots of sweets, extra bottles of wine. That said, there's **no need to eat more at a party than you would at any other**

meal. Your stomach is the same volume as your hands cupped in a bowl. Let your serving of food reflect that size, so you don't tax your digestive system with too much at one go. (You can always have something else later.)

b) It's **not necessary to eat everything** in sight. (No one will be insulted.)

- Go for whole food choices over processed (the homemade goodies rather than those from a box or a can).

- Aim to make a rainbow on your plate – a variety of colours will ensure an array of nutrients, and might just include a good selection of vegetables. Bonus: always include something green.

- Vary the textures on your plate: creamy, starchy, crunchy (some raw veggies,

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maybe?) meaty, oily... Have a couple of types to avoid too much of one kind.

3. Try Food Combining: have protein and vegetables OR starchy food and vegetables, but not protein and starch together in one meal. In other words, have the turkey or the squash & potatoes, but not both.

The theory behind this style of eating is that your digestion will work more efficiently when not trying to deal with too many different nutrients at once, all of which require different digestive enzymes, some at different pH levels.

Another important part of this principle is to keep fruit (and other concentrated sweets) away from meals – eat them before, alone as a snack, or 2 hours after. Same for liquids.

4. Listen to your body

Set an intention before you head to the event, then tune into your body's wants and needs while you're there to help keep you on track.

This can be especially important if you are an emotional eater and/or a grazer, or if you're an introvert who uses food/ alcohol as comfort in a crowd.

(Cathy will be giving a workshop Dec. 17 to expand on this idea, and to help you navigate holiday eating with grace. See the "Upcoming" box in this newsletter.)

5. Say yes to dessert...

...if you have room. This is where that tuning into your body comes in handy. Have you ever felt fully satisfied at the end of a delicious meal, then added a piece of pie that left you feeling bloated and in pain for hours? This might be a case for the food combining described in #3. It may also be that you tried to pack in too large a quantity in one go (see 2a).

There's nothing wrong with indulging in some dessert when you are honestly up for it. Again **choose wisely:**

- Are there any ingredients you are best

to avoid? Ex. Dairy, chocolate, oranges, nuts,...

- Is there a family favourite you dream about all year?
- Have a small serving of one (maybe 2) desserts and eat it mindfully, slowly, chew, savour – close your eyes if you're not engaged in conversation. In fact, savour the conversation while it's happening and then go for the chocolate torte.

If there is something you don't want to miss (like your Aunt Sophie's famous Nanaimo bars) and you don't have room in the moment, wrap up a piece to enjoy fully (see 3rd point above) with a cup of tea the next day.

Here's what to do if you DO go overboard:

First and foremost: forgiveness. You will do more damage in the long run by incessantly beating yourself up for any transgressions than the added calories and sugar did on the day. Take this opportunity as a reminder to refocus and recommit to your health goals.

For indigestion, heartburn or when poor choices mean everything's just sitting in your stomach like a bowling ball: 1 tsp of apple cider vinegar (unfiltered) in a small glass of water.

Ate (too much) sugar when you really shouldn't have? Chew on a few sticks of celery – it has the magic ability to help you metabolize the sugar and cut the craving for more. In fact, have celery right after you have that dessert.

One glass of punch too many? Take 10-15 drops of milk thistle tincture in a bit of water to help your liver process the extra alcohol. Even better, have a dose as an ounce of prevention before you head out the door, even if you only plan to have one glass.

Need help tailoring any of these suggestions to your individual needs? Cathy will be happy to support you through the holidays and beyond. Call to book a consultation today.

UpComing

Eating through the holidays can be stressful if you're trying to stick to a diet, if you're an emotional eater, or if you're an introvert who uses food as comfort in a crowd.

No matter what causes your anxiety around eating at this time of year, you can enjoy the delights of the season without guilt or deprivation. Navigating Holiday Eating with Grace addresses the mindset that freezes health-conscious women in the face of too many temptations.

Join holistic nutrition consultant, Cathy Cochrane, at the clinic on **Monday, December 17th at 12 pm**, for this hour-long workshop. She will walk you through 3 steps to help support your health goals and calm food fears through the holiday season. As always, she will teach you effective ways to listen to your body as a tool to feeling at home around food in any social situation.

The workshop is free, though space is limited. Call to reserve your spot today.

Bring your lunch, Cathy will provide the tea.

Here are 6 Tips For Staying Healthy Over The Holiday Season

*By: Jess Sherman M.Ed, RHN
Board Certified Nutritionist*

The holidays can create a lot of stress on our bodies (ironically). We're out of our rhythm, our diets and eating patterns change, and, depending on your family, there is the stress of travel and pressure added in on top! When there's stress we get run down and, too often come January we're sick and, quite honestly, ready for a holiday!

1. Get enough sleep.

When routine is shot, it's tempting to stay

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up late and to let your kids do the same. But lack of sleep wears a body down quickly.

Sleep is our time to rejuvenate. Our hormones balance and our bodies detoxify when we sleep. During sleep we regulate cortisol levels, and high cortisol levels can disrupt our immune function.

Lack of sleep can also lead to overeating because our hunger and satiety hormones, ghrelin and leptin, are regulated when we sleep.

You can think of sleep as our body's way of hitting the reset button so we're ready to go another round.

So try, best you can, to maintain some sort of consistent bedtime routine over the holidays... despite all the excitement.

2. Extra magnesium.

We all eat too much sugar over the holidays. There are all kinds of problems with sugar which I won't get into here, but one thing to remember is that sugar depletes us of magnesium.

The mineral magnesium is a catalyst involved in making some 200 or so reactions happen in the body. So because of that low levels of magnesium can have far reaching effects ranging of fatigue to insomnia to leg cramps. Extra magnesium this time of year can help keep you strong.

3. Stay hydrated.

In the winter months as the weather gets colder we tend to get dehydrated. Dehydration adds an extra burden on the body leaving it sluggish. We are more likely to get constipated and retain metabolic waste when we are dehydrated. We are also more likely to get headaches and feel tired, which in turn makes us more likely to sink into the couch with the TV remote.

Drink lots of water and herbal tea to stay hydrated.

4. Eat raw fruits and veggies.

Fresh fruits and vegetables are high in antioxidants which help protect the body from stress. In my family I increase our consumption of elderberry in the winter months as well. It is particularly high in vitamin C, which is a powerful antioxidant.

5. Take time to relax.... but avoid becoming a couch potato

Of all the things that make us ill, stress is the elephant in the room. Stress will trump all our efforts at staying healthy because it starts a cascade of hormonal havoc in our bodies that has been linked to just about every illness going. Stress also increases the hormone cortisol which can negatively affects immune function, sleep, weight, and gut health.

So take some time to relax over the holiday, but try to do so in an active way. Get outside, go for a walk, go skating with the kids, have a snowball fight. Move your body and reconnect with your family, your spouse, and your kids. Set some goals. Breathe into the beauty of your life.

6. Take your probiotics and eat your ferments.

Healthy digestion is key for healthy immune function. If you're into fermented food now's the time to boost consumption. If you're not, then get a broad spectrum probiotic supplement. Probiotics will ensure that the stress and sugar of the holidays will not open up a "window of opportunity" for pathogenic bacteria and yeast to proliferate in the gut.

Alongside all these strategies you might also consider extra Vitamin D drops and Deep Immune (or Deep Immune For Kids).

Have a safe and happy holiday season! Follow these simple steps so you can enjoy it - while it's going on and after it's all over



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