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520 2nd Ave, South Charleston, WV 25303 . wvpresbytery.org . 304-744-7634



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Reduce Loneliness Around the Holidays

1. Join a group or activity. Invite yourself!
2. Write notes or send cards to those you love or care about. See how many cards you can send.
3. List the people who love you or taught you something important. Say thank you.
4. Try something new. A new recipe, a game, a new walk.
5. Go to church or worship. Take a friend with you.
6. Decorate.
7. Try to make someone else feel cared for.



Holiday Health Tips

by Jeff Hartman

As we approach yet another holiday season we look forward to visiting family, giving/receiving gifts, and most importantly – FOOD!

While it is rare that families are serving healthy options for Thanksgiving or the other holidays celebrated in the States, it falls on the eater to make the right decision to avoid gaining what some surveys say is up to 8 lbs on average the whole season. Unfortunately, the older one gets, the slower their metabolism works and the harder it gets to fight off the holiday pounds and other potential health hazards. High cholesterol, an increase in blood pressure and foods that can cause inflammation to joints are just some of the things to keep in mind – particularly for older adults. Below are 8 holiday health tips to help keep a balanced health plan during the holiday season:

1. Take a Walk after Large Meals

After large meals in particular, it is natural to want to rest (and for me catch in a nap during football). While sleep during the holidays is important (see Tip #8), it has the potential to allow food to sit. As food sits, particularly carbs, it does not turn into energy for your body. Instead it gets stored into fat cells. Throughout life, it is important to keep a somewhat active lifestyle to age healthily. A walk, even if it isn't very far or fast, can do wonders for your body both during the holidays as well as the rest of the year. To make it the best, include the whole family in your walk!

2. Wash Hands Frequently

With family visiting from all over, they can carry all kinds of potentially harmful bacteria. To combat this, just remember to wash your hands. Kids in particular should also wash their hands to both prevent and stop the spread of any sickness going around the house.



3. Don't Drink Alcohol in Excess

The holidays are a great time to relax with your favorite beverage and enjoy time with your loved ones. Most alcohol is loaded with carbs and unnecessarily high calorie counts. The effects of loaded beverages can cause inflammation of the joints, making problematic joints and muscles worse. While it may be hard to not indulge, there are many choices to not over-indulge and still have a good time. Instead of mixing alcohol with sodas, try tonic water or diet drinks. Watch out for juice drinks that can carry high levels of sugar. If beer is more your style, try to drink light beers. Also, any type of wheat ale tend to carry less calories. Even eggnog can be made somewhat healthy! Soy milk and skim milk, along with avoiding whipped cream can save you calories.

4. Drink Plenty of Water

With all the food, alcohol and activities, your body runs a higher risk of dehydration. Water is good on many levels for your body. Water helps flush out toxins and cleanse the body faster than any other drink because it contains replenishing electrolytes. Tap water contains fluoride, which is important in retaining healthy dental hygiene. Water can help stop you from overeating by making you feel full faster. After a plate, drink a glass of water and see if you still want another plate. A lot of times, food goes in faster than your body can process it for digestion. While you may be on plate #2, your brain may just now be getting the message that it is full from plate #1. By then, it is too late and you will be REALLY full!

5. Try to Avoid Eating Heavy Meals Late at Night

Many American families have started their holiday meals, particularly Thanksgiving, earlier in the afternoon. While this may happen for a multitude of other reasons, it is actually a great way to stay healthy. The earlier you eat, the better the opportunity to burn off your meal. It also decreases the chances of falling asleep while digesting a meal. Depending on your activity level and choices, you may be able to sneak some leftovers in before bed – just be sure to drink water and walk around a bit before going to bed.

6. Seek Flavoring Alternatives

Butter, Salt and Pepper are staples of our culture for our dinner tables. Try to avoid simply adding salt and butter without tasting the food first. Often times there are plenty of additives already in the food. Seek out more spices to substitute for the salt and butter. If you use butter for bread, try dipping it in gravy already on your plate or making a sandwich with what you already have chosen to eat.

7. Watch Your Carbohydrates

The most common carb on the table is going to be bread. Dinner rolls and biscuits are heavy things to eat and can fill you up fast. The reason for this is that carbohydrates are used in your body for energy – so your body almost craves them. Watch how many bread rolls you take at the table. These will also fill you up faster and can increase your risk for overeating significantly. Carbohydrates also can cause inflammation of joints and muscles – particularly along the spinal cord and back.

8. Keep a Regular Sleep Schedule

Have you developed a routine? Routines typically includes a time for sleep and a time to wake up. It is recommended for most adults to get at least 6 hours of sleep per night, but no more than 8. While younger family members use the holiday off-time to catch up on sleep and relax, they too get thrown off by a different sleep schedule. If you are in bed by 9:00-10:00 normally, try to be in bed by that time and wake up when you usually do. If you are more nocturnal, try to keep that schedule as well.

Most importantly, ENJOY THE HOLIDAYS! The above are simply recommendations to assist in the good health you keep all year. If you think you can be healthier, then that may be a great New Year's Resolution. Holidays are a great opportunity to spend quality time with family and enjoy the pageantry. Have a happy holiday!

