

WV Wellness

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Mind, Body and Spirit

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10 TIPS FOR SURVIVING THE HOLIDAYS

As the festive holiday season is upon us, many Americans find it stressful to keep up with often-unrealistic demands and expectations of family, friends and events. The solution to an enjoyable celebration is to relax and take good care of ourselves, which in turn will increase energy and reduce stress levels. To keep happy and safe this season, ACE offers 10 tips for surviving the holidays.

- 1. Take time for yourself.** Although spending time with friends and family is essential, it's also important to set aside at least five minutes for yourself to relax. Try practicing deep breathing exercises when you feel stressed out.
- 2. Don't set unrealistic exercise goals.** Aim to exercise 30 minutes a day instead of an hour. You'll be sure to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity per day without feeling disappointed if you do not complete an hour.
- 3. Enlist a friend or family member to exercise with you.** Walking and talking with a friend can be a great way to burn extra calories and reduce your stress level.

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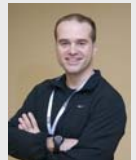
Willamette View

TIPS FROM THE TRAINER

Tom Irving

Wellness
Specialist

NSCA-CPT



Start Slow

Many people are eager to get started and sometimes overdo it, which usually makes them sore and can make them want to stop. A good way to start slowly is to discover your baseline. Record all your activities during each waking hour or for two- or three-hour time blocks, tracking how much time you are sedentary (e.g. sitting at meals, reading, etc.) or active (e.g. walking to the Wellness Center, gardening etc.). At day's end, count how many hours you have and have not been physically active. Then look at when you could fit some short (e.g. 10 minutes) bouts of brisk walking into your day.

Willamette View Wellness Program 503-652-6700

4. **Create new, more active traditions.** Instead of throwing a dessert or cocktail party, go for a walk or come on down to the Wellness Center for an extra class or exercise session on the strength/cardio equipment.
5. **Don't try to lose weight or stick to a restrictive diet this holiday season.** If you enjoy your favorite foods in small portions, you'll feel more satisfied. Trying to stay away from certain foods may leave you feeling deprived, which may cause you to eat more than you planned.
6. **Drink plenty of water.** Although the cold weather may make you less inclined to grab a glass of water, it is just as important in the winter as it is during the summer. Water helps counter the dehydrating effects of travel or drinking alcoholic beverages, and it may also help satiate your appetite since thirst is often mistaken for hunger.
7. **Spread out meals.** Don't feel like you have to eat everything at once. Try eating dinner early and then taking a walk before sitting down for dessert.
8. **Don't overdo it with alcohol or caffeine.** These stimulants will only cause you more grief in the long-run by adding to your feelings of stress. Try drinking hot herbal tea instead of coffee, and keep the number of alcoholic drinks to a minimum.
9. **Don't aim for perfection, and enjoy the imperfections.** There is no such thing as the perfect party or the perfect decorations or the perfect way to spend the holidays. Don't set yourself up for disappointment by placing unrealistic demands on yourself.
10. **Laugh.** Laughing is a great tension reliever. It burns calories, reduces stress and usually means that you and those individuals in your presence are having an enjoyable time.