



BalanceHealthSM Newsletter

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Healthy Swaps for the Holiday Season

The holiday season is in full swing. Family gatherings, holiday parties, shopping trips, and annual events fill up our schedules and keep everyone busy through the beginning of the New Year. While our busy holiday schedules may be filled with excitement and joy, all of the traveling and celebrating can greatly overshadow meal planning and healthy eating.

Eating healthy during the holidays doesn't have to be difficult. While focusing on healthy choices may seem challenging at times, simple swaps of food and actions can boost your energy, immune system, and festive mood. Below are suggested "switches" that will allow you to enjoy the best foods of the holidays without the weight gain and fatigue.

Toss the creams and butters.

Replace heavy creams with low-fat or dairy-free options for a creamy texture without the guilt. Use olive oil and spices rather than butter to cook vegetables, boosting their

flavor while minimizing unnecessary fats.

Swap sides.

Toss collard greens in lemon juice and herbs rather than whipping up a green bean casserole. Create a new tradition by introducing a wild rice and vegetable bake to holiday meals in place of high-carb stuffing. Rather than serving traditional cranberry sauces and relishes, sauté butternut squash, onions, cranberries, and sage for a healthy, sweet and crowd pleasing side dish.

Mix up your drink choices.

Removing sodas and punches from your diet can greatly reduce sugar intake. If you are craving a sweet, carbonated drink, fill a glass with sparkling water and a splash of juice. Along with cutting soda from your diet, set down the egg nog and grab a mug of sugar-free hot chocolate. If you can't resist a few sips of egg nog each year, choose

For more information or advice about healthy holiday swaps, contact your Wellness Coordinator by calling:

1.800.327.2255

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a dairy-free option to reduce fat and sugar.

Switch from take-out to eat-in.

Put down the take-out menu and make a quick meal from items in your refrigerator and pantry. Mix vegetables, herbs, wild rice, and lean meat with oil in a baking dish and stick it in the oven while you continue to write lists, wrap presents, and plan gatherings. You'll have a filling and nutrient-dense meal that takes minimal effort to prepare, boosting your mood and protecting your bank account.

Grab nutrient-rich desserts.

Avoiding all treats during the holidays can be a challenging feat. Rather than struggling to abstain completely, select vitamin-rich items, such as a slice of pumpkin pie. Unlike many other holiday treats, pumpkin pie is low in calories and saturated fat, while high in Vitamin A. This vitamin works overtime to promote healthy eyesight and soft skin, prevent acne, lower cholesterol and strengthen bones.

Adjust your habits.

Choose a small plate to control portions and eat slower to feel more full and satisfied. Even when a meal is over and it feels like a great time to sit and relax, skip the nap after

finishing a large meal and take a walk instead. A quick walk outside will jumpstart digestion, boost your mood, and allow for a moment of quiet during your hectic holiday schedule.

Bulk up on the "good stuff."

While it is not always possible to avoid all unhealthy options during the holidays, increasing your intake of high-quality foods will help you to stay energized and avoid seasonal illnesses. Prepare dishes that feature cranberries and blueberries for a burst of antioxidants and fiber. Incorporate broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage into dishes for a large dose of vitamins and probiotics. Don't forget to treat yourself, too. Enjoy a piece of dark chocolate for a rich dessert that supports your cardiovascular system and reduces your risk of developing cancers.

The holidays are a fun yet hectic time. Staying strong, energized, and healthy is possible with a few diet and habit tweaks. Take control of your health without missing out on the festive celebrations and you'll enjoy all that this season has to offer!

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