



Staying Fit for the Holidays

Trying to maintain a healthy lifestyle in the midst of holiday hoopla may have you despairing until the new year. But, stay the course; there are ways to remain fit and healthy through the season, while still enjoying that extra slice of pumpkin pie.

“During the holiday season, the biggest culprits leading to holiday weight gain are too much indulgence and a disruption of your regular routine,” says Chicago-based holistic wellness coach [Erin Clifford](#).

“Instead of hitting the gym or cooking a healthy meal after work,” she says, “many of us find our schedules filled with holiday parties, cookie swaps and family dinners, not to mention the late-night frozen pizza after too much eggnog.”

Clifford offers these strategies to help survive the holidays without missing out on your favorite treats:

- **Never arrive hungry.** Before going to a party, have a high protein-and-fiber snack, such as half a turkey sandwich on sprouted grain toast, an apple with almond butter, or flax crackers with a piece of string cheese. “This will help you pass on the high-calorie appetizers that are a big contributor to holiday weight gain,” says Clifford.
- **Choose your splurge.** When you go to a holiday party, choose one food item that you cannot live without and then fill the rest of your plate with protein and vegetables.
- **Be mindful of drinking your calories, and do so in moderation.** “Yes, that candy cane Frappuccino and bottle of wine count,” Clifford says.
- **Be wary of social pressures.** “Don’t let friends talk you into that extra glass of wine or second slice of pecan pie,” says Clifford.
- **Keep a food journal to track your food and drink intake.** “A food diary encourages you to eat fewer calories and make healthier choices because it increases your awareness of what, how much, and why you are eating,” says Clifford.
- **Don’t skip your workouts.** If you don’t have time for your full routine, schedule time for a few sessions during the week, even if it’s just an extended walk with your dog or 30 minutes over your lunch hour. “Working out also decreases our stress levels, which is something we all need to survive the holiday marathon!” says Clifford.

When it comes to a fitness routine, Matt Masarsky, director of fitness operations for the nationwide fitness gym chain Retro Fitness, says it's important to be realistic, and never more so than during the holidays.

"If you're not a morning person, don't promise to go to the gym every morning at 5 a.m.," he says. Similarly, if you aren't a fan of biking, don't join a spin class.

"Take both your lifestyle and interests into consideration, and from there, construct a workout routine comprised of activities you enjoy," he says.

Masarsky says the holiday season is a great time to incorporate new workout "tools" to keep your workouts interesting, which will keep you motivated. If weight training is getting a bit old, for example, how about jumping rope, or using resistance bands or stability balls?

The American Council on Exercise has tips for ways to stay active during the holiday season that won't keep you away from holiday merriment, such as organizing a neighborhood caroling event, having a snowball fight or inviting house guests for a walk.

As Dani Singer, the Baltimore-based fitness director of Fit2Go Personal Training, puts it: "Remember that exercise is not a punishment and food is not a reward. They are simply tools for enhancing your quality of life."