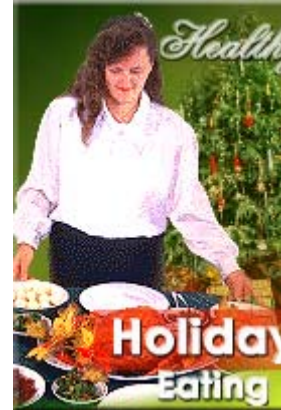




5 Practical Ways to Improve & Enjoy Eating Healthy During the Holidays

By Jodi L. Jones

During the holidays, most of us put our health on hold until we proclaim our new year's resolutions based on health, happiness, and prosperity. We tend to forsake our own health interests and instead give in to the pressures and stress generated by holiday madness.



It's not uncommon to hear people say, "After the holidays, I plan to lose weight (or, commit to an exercise regimen, or, take better care of myself)." For some reason, many of us never consistently execute a plan even after the holidays, finding many reasons to wait.

There is a natural tendency to procrastinate about taking care of our health during this time. After all, temptations surround us. We find the holiday season packing our days and nights with an abundance of social activities and holiday gift shopping—leaving no time for exercise and relaxation. We are seduced by many unhealthy food choices at every social gathering—alcohol, refined sugar, hydrogenated fats, simple carbohydrates, and an abundance of processed foods. Over-indulgence in these unhealthful foods can undermine your health and drain your energy. The holiday season is exhausting enough; you need all the health and energy to not just survive, but to thrive, during this time.

The following nutrition tips will help you do just that—thrive, not just survive, throughout the holidays.

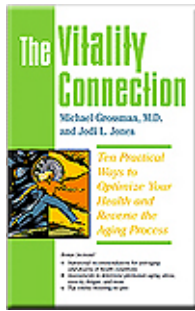
The 5 P's for Healthy Holiday Nutrition

1. [Promise](#)
2. [Plan](#)
3. [Prepare](#)
4. [Portions](#)
5. [Prevention](#)

1. **Promise** yourself that you will stay in control during the holidays. Write down your healthy holiday commitments before you get too far down the path of over indulgence. By taking the time to document your commitments, and by reviewing this document daily, there is a greater likelihood that you will actually keep your healthy holiday promises. Your promises might include one or more of the following:

- a. I promise to take control over my food choices at each meal.
- b. I promise to eliminate alcohol (or caffeine, or sugar) during the holidays.
- c. I promise to only take one serving of my favorite foods at each meal.
- d. I promise to choose my dietary indiscretions wisely and in moderation.

2. **Plan** your holiday menus well in advance. This doesn't just mean the main holiday meal that you may be responsible for cooking. This requires that you pay close attention to your dietary choices every meal throughout the holiday season.



The Vitality Connection: Ten Practical Ways to Optimize Your Health and Reverse the Aging Process by Michael Grossman, M.D. and Jodi Jones

The more thought you put into your menu selection, the more time you will have to create and enjoy more healthful foods. Take time to research the Internet for healthful holiday recipes as substitutes for your traditional unhealthy holiday dishes. A few healthy holiday recipes are included in Jodi's Healthy Kitchen. It is very likely that you will succumb to the various holiday treats offered at the office and at other people's homes. While you're at home, take advantage of the control you are able to have over your food selections. To reduce temptation while at home, simply don't purchase and don't make unhealthy food. Take the time now to perform a healthy kitchen makeover so your kitchen is "temptation proof." Key Factor Five in *The Vitality Connection* offers the ten practical ways to perform a healthy kitchen make. In addition to preparing your kitchen for optimum nutrition, observe the following tips which require planning and discipline:

- a. Don't eat within three hours of retiring to bed.
 - b. Eat frequent (at least four) small nutritious meals daily.
 - c. Eat balanced meals including good fats, plant-based protein, low-glycemic/complex carbohydrates, and fiber.
 - d. Take a healthy appetizer or side dish when visiting friends/family members for dinner—this way you'll be assured there will be at least one healthy option.
 - e. Substitute iceberg lettuce with dark leafy greens when making a salad, and include a variety of colorful vegetables.
 - f. Use healthful sugar, dairy, and fat substitutes when cooking and baking.
 - i. Substitute sugar with a natural sugar-substitute such as Xylitol (Xylitol comes from the birch tree, has 40% less calories, looks and tastes like sugar, and has a very low glycemic score of 7)
 - ii. Substitute cow's milk with a non-gmo soymilk alternative.
 - iii. Substitute butter with small amounts of extra-virgin olive oil (when appropriate).
 - iv. Substitute a creamy salad dressing with a blend of extra-virgin olive oil and balsamic vinegar.
 - v. Substitute brown sugar on your yams with brown rice syrup
3. **Prepare** as much in advance in order to minimize stress and anxiety. The holiday season generates stress for most of us; stress about finances, gift giving, family pressures, entertaining, and the list goes on. Stress causes us to make poor choices as it relates to money, time management, and especially food. We tend to eat more (unhealthful foods) when we are feeling stressed or anxious. In order to stay in control over our dietary choices, we need to reduce and manage our stress. A few healthful stress management techniques that will help keep you calm and relaxed include:
- a. Take a brisk fifteen-minute walk at least once a day.
 - b. Take ten minutes to meditate daily: sit comfortably in a quiet room with your eyes closed and your mind focused on serenity and your breathing. Breathe in deeply through your

- nose, hold for a count of two, and exhale slowly through your mouth. Repeat this deep breathing exercise forty times.
- c. Listen to soothing, relaxing music while preparing for various holiday activities: wrapping gifts, cooking meals, visiting friends/family.
4. **Portion** control is a key weapon against over eating. Eating to the point of feeling bloated is not only uncomfortable it is also very unhealthy. Not only are you consuming unnecessary calories, you are probably also ingesting many anti-nutrients (such as sugar, caffeine, hydrogenated fats, and so on) that are robbing your body of its required nutrition. Equally important, your body simply cannot digest these excessive food particles adequately; the toxins generated from undigested foods reenter your blood stream and create free radical damage within the cells of your body. Over eating also impairs the effectiveness of your immune system. During the holidays, especially, you need your immune system operating at peak performance. Other immune challenging activities include consuming alcohol, smoking, stress, and lack of sleep. Some key tips on portion control include the following:
- a. Drink an 8-ounce glass of filtered water before your meal.
 - b. Use a smaller plate than normal—or visualize dividers on the plate and don't allow your food to touch, thereby reducing the available surface area of the plate.
 - c. Only take one helping of the meal—do not go back for seconds
 - d. Eat your salad and your vegetables first, then eat your protein source, and lastly, eat your carbohydrates (choose only low-glycemic or complex).
 - e. Chew your foods deliberately and thoroughly.
5. **Prevention** is paramount. As the saying goes, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. If one of your goals is to stay healthy and avoid getting sick during the holidays, you need to not only exercise and reduce stress, you also need to optimize your nutritional intake. It is simply not possible to obtain optimum nutrition from the foods you ingest—especially given the likelihood that you will consume many anti-nutrients. It is important to supplement your diet with pharmaceutical-grade vitamins and minerals. At a minimum, take a high-quality multivitamin daily to help keep your immune system functioning at peak performance. Key Factor Six in *The Vitality Connection* offers the ten practical ways to supplement your diet with quality vitamins and minerals.

