Tips to Stay Fit Through the Holidays

Celebrations and parties with family and friends. An abundance of delicious foods and treats. The busy holiday season will soon be here.

The American Council on Exercise (ACE) offers these tips on how to stay fit and avoid the typical weight gain and stress associated with the holiday season.

1. TAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF.

Although spending time with friends and family is essential, it’s also important to carve out some relaxation time (at least five minutes) for yourself. Try practicing deep breathing when you feel stressed out.

2. SET REALISTIC EXCERCISE GOALS.

Aim to exercise 30 minutes a day instead of an hour. If more convenient, divide your exercise into eight-to 10-minute intervals throughout the day.

3. ENLIST THE SUPPORT OF A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER.

Walking and talking with a friend can be a great way to socialize, burn extra calories and reduce your stress level. Having a physical activity “buddy” will help you stick to your exercise goals.

4. CREATE NEW, MORE ACTIVE TRADITIONS.

Instead of throwing a dessert or cocktail party, try ice-skating or Nordic walking or other fun outdoor activity as an alternate holiday event. Play powder puff football or build a snowman.

5. AVOID AN OVERLY RESTRICTIVE DIET DURING THE HOLIDAYS.

If you enjoy your favorite foods in small portions, you’ll feel more satisfied. Trying to stay away from foods you enjoy may leave you feeling deprived, which may cause you to eat more than you intended to.

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. It may also help satisfy 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. AVOID OR LIMIT LIQUID CALORIES.

Many popular holiday beverages contain stimulants (e.g. alcohol or caffeine) that may add to your feelings of stress and increase your blood sugar levels causing you to eat more. Try having a glass of sparkling water after a glass of wine or cup of eggnog.

9. SET REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS FOR YOUR HOLIDAYS AND ENJOY THE IMPERFECTIONS.

Setting unrealistic demands on yourself for the perfect party, perfect decorations or the perfect way to spend the holidays will add to your holiday stress and may set you up for disappointment.

10. MAKE EXERCISE A PRIORITY.

Try to exercise first thing in the morning before other demands sidetrack you. Individuals with an early-morning exercise routine tend to be more consistent when pressed for time.

For more fitness tips, see the ACE website at www.acefitness.org.