

Strive To Thrive

Pathways... Leading the way to a better feeling you!

18 Ways to Stay on Track over the Holidays By: Tanya Jolliffe



Congratulations on making it through all of those Thanksgiving temptations! Now, it's time to face the upcoming barrage of holiday parties over the next month. Between the office buffets, neighborhood open houses, family gatherings, religious festivities, and community get-togethers, sticking to a healthy eating plan can become difficult, to say the least.

While there are a variety of excuses to overindulge during the holidays, the best defense against holiday eating disasters is a good plan of action. There is no better way to formulate a plan for holiday survival than to learn from how others stay healthy during this time of joy and celebration. Use these helpful SparkPeople member tips to stay on track into the New Year.

"When people offer you tempting food options, tell them you are "in training" to lead a healthier lifestyle. In my experience, many people seem to take that better than if I were to say "I'm watching my weight." You can be "in training" for anything, including living a healthier life."

"Mentally practice passing up foods that you've chosen not to indulge in ahead of time. This makes it easier to actually follow through with your plan when the time comes. You're just re-enacting the scene you've already played out in your head many times."

"When making latkes, use a non-stick frying pan and boiled potatoes instead of raw ones in the mixture. This helps to eliminate the need for a huge amount of fat."

"When baking quick breads (like zucchini, pumpkin, blueberry, etc.), use unsweetened applesauce instead of oil. Some people say to use part oil and part applesauce, but using just unsweetened applesauce makes for a very moist bread while cutting out a load of fat and calories."

"Do you get weary thinking of how much extra work the holidays require? If you have grown children, consider going away for the holidays to reduce stress while also allowing your kids the opportunity to establish their own family traditions. Instead, try getting together as an extended family a few weeks later, after the holiday craziness has settled down."

"It is important to realize one person can't do everything. Allow everyone to pitch in and help, including young children. People really do enjoy contributing and knowing that they played a part in the celebration."

"Do you receive gifts of candy and cookies that you know will be too tempting to avoid? Consider dropping them by a homeless shelter. Although the homeless may struggle with health issues, the treats can help brighten their day."

"Say NO to the treats you really don't love so you can say YES and enjoy the treats you do!"

"There are plenty of things to DO to make a holiday special besides EATING. Focus on ways to spend quality time with family and friends that don't include food, such as volunteering to ring the bell for the Salvation Army, or helping sort food at the local food

bank. Pull out a deck of cards and board games, and enjoy some friendly competition and laughs. Get out old pictures, slides and videos of holidays past and enjoy the memories."

"Do you typically participate in a cookie exchange with family or friends? Consider suggesting a new focus other than food this year, such as an ornament or book exchange. Another option is to enjoy making the cookies and then creating mix and match plates of the delicious goodies to take to your local fire or police station, Ronald McDonald house or Big Brothers/Big Sisters center to help brighten the holidays of those who are less fortunate."

"As you are preparing the house for the festivities, turn the chores into "stealth" exercise. Put on your workout clothes to get into workout mode. Crank up the inspirational music and vacuum and clean vigorously fast to get that heart rate up. Not only will you get the cleaning done in record time, but you will also fit in an interval workout as well."

"Be encouraged by holiday snowfall. Not only is it beautiful, but it also provides great ways to exercise when you shovel the snow or walk up hills after enjoying a sled ride down."

"Don't forget about getting proper sleep and rest amidst your hectic holiday schedule. Feeling refreshed can help you enjoy the season more!"

"I try to remember that Thanksgiving is a single day in November, and Christmas is a single day in December. The holidays do NOT include all the days in between--unless I let them!"

"Set goals to track your food, continue to exercise, and look for other ways to celebrate the holidays that don't include food. If you can, limit the social obligations to just a few and go full, not hungry. Know yourself and be mindful of the landmines that can sabotage your efforts toward your goals."

"Find accountability buddies (on SparkPeople or otherwise) who can offer you support and ideas to stay on track through the holidays. Having others in your life who understand your daily struggles makes a difference."

"With so many things going on during the holidays, you might feel like you are on a treadmill and can't get off. Step back, meditate for a while and calm down. Feeling calmer can help you feel more positive."

"The holidays evoke a variety of feelings such as stress, fatigue, unrealistic expectations, over-commercialization, or financial constraints. If you are feeling down during this time of year, throwing yourself into volunteering does wonders at putting things into perspective."

What tips and tricks do you use to stay on track during this time of year? Which of these ideas will help you make positive choices this year?

HEALTHY ROUTINE FOR DECEMBER:

Wake up at the same time every morning and DON'T hit the snooze button!

Stick-With-It Winter Workout Tips

When the temperature drops, so can your motivation to get outside and get moving. So how do you resist the temptation to stay curled up under a blanket until spring arrives? According to a poll of SparkPeople.com members, 76% of exercisers have a hard time staying motivated in the winter.

Keeping a consistent routine helps me avoid holiday weight gain and deal with stress during this chaotic time of year.

If you are dreading the cold, you can't always blame the weather. Your attitude and approach go a long way, too. Winter doesn't have to be a time to abandon your regular workout routine if you've got a good plan in place. Here's how to stay comfortable exercising outside—and adjust your plan when getting outdoors just isn't feasible.

Winter-Proof Your Workouts for Maximum Results!

Weatherize Your Body with the Right Clothes

Outdoor exercise is no fun when your fingers and toes are freezing (or when you're bundled up like Randy in "A Christmas Story"). Learning how to layer properly with the right kinds of clothes (breathable yet insulating) will allow you to concentrate more on your workout and less on the temperature around you. Layers + Coach Nicole's must-have accessory for winter workouts will keep you comfy all season long.

Be Smart about Safety

Although you don't want to use weather as an excuse not to exercise, it's important to be smart. Completing a workout should never be a matter of life and death—no matter how committed you are. If you layer up, watch the forecast, and follow these winter workout precautions, you'll be safe during most of the season. For those times when it's too cold to be outside, consider mixing it up with an indoor workout. Check out Coach Nancy's cold weather

exercise tips for more ideas.

Excuse-Proof Your Routine

Just because you can't take your regular walk outside today doesn't give you an excuse to be a couch potato. For those days when an outdoor exercise isn't an option, have a backup plan! With the right attitude and mix of exercises, winter can actually be a fantastic time to mix up your workouts, get creative and even reignite your love of fitness by trying new, fun activities (indoors or out). If all else fails, embrace the cold instead of fighting it; some of winter's unique activities also melt mega calories.

Beat the Blues

Many people experience a case of the "winter blues" (characterized by the mild depression, lack of motivation, and low energy) this time of year. Luckily, there's a lot you can do to both prevent the blues from coming on and get yourself back to normal if they're already here. There are easy ways to stay healthy and happy despite the

weather outside, everything from spending time outside to focusing on a healthy diet. A less-than-peppy mood may be typical in this season, but for some people, cold weather and lack of sunshine bring on more than the usual winter blahs. It can bring on a form of clinical depression called Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). If you think you might have SAD, find a health professional who can help you treat it.

Instead of dreading the cold weather, consider it a time to get creative with new workouts and find different ways to challenge yourself. Use the change of seasons as a chance to change up your usual fitness routine. That way you can continue working toward your goals and seeing progress, regardless of what the thermometer reads this season!

By: Jen Mueller

Adapted from sparkpeople.com

Santa Strawberries (Cream Cheese-Stuffed Strawberry Bites)

INGREDIENTS

24 large strawberries

Fresh 1/2 cup cream cheese frosting (homemade or store-bought)

PREPARATION

Prepare the strawberries:

Use a paring knife to carefully remove the green leaves and white hull (center) of each berry. Slice off the top 1/4 of each berry, reserving the tops.

Place the frosting in a resealable plastic bag with one corner snipped or a pastry bag with a very small tip.

Place the berries bottom side down on a platter. Working one at a time, pipe frosting onto the "top" of the berry. Replace the reserved berry top and pipe three dots onto the front of each berry to look like buttons and one dot on top to resemble the pom-pom on a hat.

NUTRITION

Servings Per Recipe: 24

Calories: 25.4

Total Fat: 0.9 g

Cholesterol: 0.0 mg

Sodium: 9.4 mg

Total Carbs: 4.5 g

Dietary Fiber: 0.4 g

Protein: 0.1 g



Sparkrecipes.com



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Pathways' Strive for Five Mission Statement:

Pathways' Strive for Five Program is dedicated to helping consumers living with mental illness to achieve a higher quality of life by enhancing one's nutritional awareness and helping consumers to become more active. Pathways understands that our consumers will be able to live longer, happier, and healthier lives by providing them with the tools, knowledge and resources any person would need to achieve a physically and mentally well-balanced life.