



Can you believe the holidays are upon us? It seems like yesterday that we had Thanksgiving and Christmas. While the holidays may be a time of rejoicing and celebration for many of us, for others, it can be filled with unhealthy choices and added stress. Here are four simple tips you can follow this holiday season. These tips are meant to help you stay focused, healthy, and stress free throughout the year.

1) Exercise. The benefits of exercising has been proven in multiple studies and has a lasting effect on us. Exercising not only helps with glycemic control and insulin sensitivity, but also increases our good cholesterol (HDL) and decreases the bad (LDL). The American Academy of Family Physicians recommends only 120 mins of moderate-intense exercise per week. How do you know if the exercise you are doing is moderately intense? If after you complete your exercise and you feel breathlessness, fatigued or sweating once done, you have completed a moderately intense exercise. Primary Care Physicians often hear is, “I don’t have any time to exercise due to my schedule”. We all live in a busy world, and the holidays only seem to amplify our lack of time. Just exercising in 30 min intervals at least 3x a week, has the same benefits on reducing your stroke risk, developing diabetes, heart disease, and depression. With that said, make a schedule that is realistic for you and stick to it. In the long run, this will benefit your health.



2) Sleep. Did you know that most sleep experts recommend seven to nine hours of sleep a night, yet most adult’s only sleep an average of 6.9 hours a night. Lack of sleep has a negative effect on us and leads to increased cortisol (stress hormone) and increased morbidity. Insomnia is defined as difficulty initiating or maintaining sleep that results in daytime impairment. This is another common concern most of us in primary care hear on a daily basis. Here are a few helpful techniques that can help you combat insomnia and help you get the best night-of-sleep you deserve. Try to limit TV, computers, or exercise the hour before bed. These activities stimulate our brain and thus can impact our ability to fall asleep quickly. Instead, try reading a book, listening to soft music, or taking a warm bath before bed. Also, try going to bed and getting up at the same time every day. Not only does this help set a “routine” for you, but helps set your biological clock and keeps you fully rested. If you have already tried these techniques and still can’t fall asleep, consider speaking to your primary care provider about available treatments that best fits your needs.





Written by Christopher Collins, M.D.

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3) Diet. While most of us don't realize this, we can inadvertently intake more calories than we burn during the holidays. Thus, if you don't burn them, you keep them! Remember my earlier point about exercise?



Well, in order to keep fit, it is recommended that you burn a minimum amount of 900 Kcal energy expenditure per week, which translates to 120 mins of moderate-to-intense exercise. During the holidays, it is not uncommon for "junk" food to be laying around the office. If you are like me, I have a hard time resisting pastries. To combat this, keeping a food diary can help keep track of all of those "unwanted" calories. Technology can be our friend in helping us with this endeavor. For example, the Apple watch, Fit bit or My Fitness Pal are good examples of how technology can help track calories for you

4) Spend Wisely. I'm not an accountant or financial advisor, but it seems to me that the holidays are becoming more "commercial" than about religion and being with loved ones. With that said, financial matters can cause a lot of stress and depression for people during the holidays. Try setting a budget that you can comfortably afford - then stick to it! Try making homemade gifts, or doing favors for others like cutting the grass, washing their car or babysitting one night. These can be just as thoughtful and rewarding as any monetary gift, and you don't have to break the bank.



If you try to keep these little tricks in mind during the holidays, hopefully you won't have to make the dreaded New Year resolutions of: diet, exercise and save money. Happy holidays to you and your families! Stay fit, healthy and don't eat too much gingerbread!



Article authored by  
**Christopher Collins, M.D.**  
Board Certified in Family Medicine

[Additional information on Dr. Collins](#)

**HealthTexas Medical Group**

**Alamo Heights**

1248 Austin Hwy, Suite 214  
San Antonio, TX 782085  
Telephone: (210) 828-2531



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