13 Ways to Fight Holiday Stress

The shopping and crowds, the back-to-back diet-busting parties, the overwhelming feeling of shopping for gifts...it’s easy to feel not so wonderful at this most wonderful time of the year. From quick stress-survival strategies to mood-brightening foods, here’s your cheat sheet to holiday cheer!

1. Hike your mood with sunlight—it stimulates the production of feel-good serotonin.

2. Take a whiff of citrus—researchers studying depression have found that certain citrus fragrances boost feelings of wellbeing and alleviate stress by upping levels of norepinephrine, a hormone that affects mood.

3. Walk away from worries—the rhythm and repetition of walking has a tranquilizing effect on the brain and it decreases anxiety and improves sleep.

4. Do less, enjoy more—it’s easy to go overboard during the holidays by shopping, cooking, sending cards, and attending every event, but take care of yourself by saying no at least once—maybe more.

5. Stick with your daily routine—prioritize your workouts, book club, and don’t try to squeeze in more holiday than you can handle.

6. Don’t neglect whatever cracks you up—laughing reduces stress hormones, which helps immune cells function better.

7. Forget perfection—focus your energy on enjoying the people in your life.

8. Go tech free—Constant cell phone buzzes and email alerts keep us in a perpetual fight-or-flight mode due to bursts of adrenaline.

9. Savor a spicy meal—hot foods trigger the release of endorphins, the natural chemicals that trigger feelings of euphoria and well-being

10. Dip into some honey—research shows that honey’s antioxidant and antibacterial properties may improve immunity.

11. Eat breakfast before you have your coffee—caffeine on an empty stomach can cause blood sugar levels to spike, which can cause attention problems and irritability.

12. Turn up the tunes—Anxious? Listen to your favorite music. Some researchers have shown that hearing music you love can relax blood vessels and increase blood flow.

13. Fit in exercise—it may be the last thing you feel like doing when you’re stressed, but it can actually make you feel better!
Between the fluorescent lights, “ergonomic” desk chairs, and perpetually stocked vending machines, working in an office can feel like the complete antithesis of healthy living. Luckily, you can make small changes that encourage you to keep up your healthy lifestyle during work hours. Women’s Health integrative medicine expert Vicky Vlachonis, an osteopath and author of The Body Doesn’t Lie, shares eight ways to stay healthy at work.

1. Zen out your desk—How you set up and organize your workspace has a huge influence on your overall mood and ability to shake off stress.

2. Fill your wellness drawer—Dedicate a drawer to healthy living and fill it with healthy snacks like fruit, nuts, (non-buttery) popcorn, tea, and any-thing else that makes you feel healthy.

3. Embrace oils—Essential oils can be a great addition to your wellness routine. Whether you prefer to open them up and take a sniff, rub them on, or put a few drops in your water, they can promote digestion, perk you up, and help fight stress.

4. Drink more water—With so many hours spent at the office every day, you can’t afford to hold off hydration until you get home from work. Take a refillable bottle of water to work every day, and refill it the second it hits empty.

5. Take a post-lunch walk—Your lunch break is meant for more than just eating. Following your meals with a short walk can help prevent blood sugar spikes to improve your energy levels, prevent inflammation, and keep cravings at bay.

6. Move every hour—We all know that sitting all day can bring negative consequences, it can make circulation slow, metabolism drop, muscles tighten, and waistline expand. Make it a point to move, whether it’s stretching, walking across the office, or climbing stairs.

---

**Tailgate Chili**

**Ingredients:**
-1 lb. 95% lean ground beef (or ground white meat chicken or turkey)
-1 medium onion, chopped
-1 medium green bell pepper, chopped
-1 medium jalapeno, chopped (optional)
-4 clove minced, fresh garlic (or 2 tsp. jarred, minced garlic)
-1 tbsp. ground cumin
-1/2 tsp. ground coriander

-15.5 oz. canned, no-salt-added or low-sodium pinto or kidney beans, rinsed, drained
-14.5 oz. canned, no-salt-added or low-sodium, diced tomatoes, undrained
-3/4 cup jarred salsa (lowest sodium available)

**Directions:**
-Spray large saucepan with cooking spray. Cook beef and onion over medium-high heat for 5-7 minutes, stirring constantly to break up beef. Transfer to colander and rinse with water to drain excess fat. Return beef to pan.
-Stir in bell pepper, garlic, chili powder, and cumin. Cook 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
-Add remaining ingredients and bring to a boil. Reduce to simmer, cover, and cook for 20 minutes.

*Tip: Try sliced avocado, snipped cilantro or chopped green onions on top!*

---

**“The more we hydrate ourselves, the better our whole body functions”**

*Vicky Vlachonis*
Pilates vs. Yoga

Q: Is Pilates better than yoga for strengthening exercises?

A: The answer depends to a large degree on what it is you’re trying to strengthen. In general, Pilates exercises, originally developed by the fitness trainer Joseph Pilates, target the core muscles around the spine. If your aim is to strengthen your midsection, then Pilates is a great choice. In a small, but well-designed study last year, 9 sedentary women who completed 36 weeks of supervised Pilates training bulked up their abdominal muscles by as much as 20%, while also lessening any existing muscular imbalances there. “Pilates can be recommended as an effective method to reinforce the muscles of the abdominal wall and to compensate pre-existing asymmetric developments,” the authors said. But whether such training fortifies the rest of the body is questionable. A review last year of Pilates-related science found little credible evidence that the exercises added muscle or incinerated body fat apart from in the midsection. Yoga, however, with its flowing poses, may strengthen larger sections of the body. Pilates may be preferable if your goal is a solid core, but if you’re hoping to strengthen upper body, you’ll want to do yoga.

Coffee Tied to Lower Risk of Dying Prematurely

A large study found that drinking coffee is associated with a reduced risk of dying from heart disease and other causes. Researchers followed more than 200,000 doctors and nurses up to 30 years. The participants had periodic physical exams and completed questionnaires on diet and behavior, including coffee habits. Compared with abstainers, nonsmokers who drank a cup of coffee a day had a 6% reduced risk of death, 1-3 cups an 8% reduced risk, 3-5 cups a 15% reduced risk, and more than 5 cups a 12% reduced risk. There was little difference whether they drank caffeinated or decaffeinated coffee. The association persisted after controlling for age, alcohol consumption, BMI, and other health factors. The association was not apparent in smokers, probably because death from smoking-related causes overwhelms the positive effect of coffee drinking. Dr. Ding, of the Harvard School of Public Health, said, “our study is observational, so it’s hard to know if the positive effect is causal or not.”

Rosemary Balsamic Roasted Vegetables

Ingredients:
- Cooking spray
- 1/2 lb. Brussel sprouts, brown ends trimmed off and cut in half
- 1/2 medium cauliflower, cut into florets
- 4 medium carrots, peeled and sliced (1/4 in. rounds)
- 1/2 lb. turnips, peeled and chopped into 1/2 inch cubes
- 1/2 lb. beets, peeled and chopped into 1/2 inch cubes
- 1 small sweet potato (peeled, optional) cut into 3/4 inch cubes
- 3 tbsp. balsamic vinegar
- 3 tsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tsp. no-calorie sweetener, granulated, 1 packet
- 2 tbsp. fresh, chopped rosemary (or 2 tsp. dried rosemary)
- 2 cloves fresh, minced garlic
- 1 tsp. onion powder
- 1/2 tsp. pepper
- 1/4 tsp. salt

Directions:
- Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.
- Spray 9x13 baking dish with cooking spray.
- Thoroughly wash all vegetables, cut and toss together in a large bowl.
- In a small bowl, whisk together vinegar, oil, no-calorie sweetener, rosemary, garlic, onion powder, pepper, and salt. Pour over vegetable mixture and toss well.
- Pour vegetable mixture into prepared 9x13 baking dish. Bake in preheated oven for 30-35 minutes, stirring once, until all vegetables are softened.
Our Mission

• Identify, recommend and promote programs and services that emphasize healthy behaviors, including but not limited to nutritional, emotional and physical well-being; foster a campus culture supportive and encouraging of healthy behaviors and choices;

• Increase awareness, knowledge and skills important to improving and maintaining health and supportive of the University’s mission; and

• Regularly assess the quality of campus wellness activities and programs, identify unmet needs and resource issues, and recommend options to senior administration.

How to Get Over Your Fear of Barbells

Even if you love strength training, chances are you shy away from your gym’s barbells. It’s understandable to be intimidated, but have no fear, as long as you keep these tips in mind you will have the confidence you need to hit the weights.

1. Start with just the bar—when working with a new piece of equipment, like a barbell, you need to master the movement before you start upping the weight. “You should be perfectly confident just using the bar for your first few reps or sets,” says Holly Perkins, author of Lift to Get Lean and founder of Women’s Strength Nation.

2. Adjust weights slowly (and with help) - If you step up to a barbell and it’s weighted heavier than you’d like, or if you’re comfortable with your barbell and feel ready to add some more weight to each side, it’s in your best interest to adjust weight plates slowly.

3. Move with care—To stay safe and also prevent inadvertently making a scene, never try to move a weighted barbell around the gym. Instead, take the weights off slowly and then move the bar. (If the bar is up high, you might need to bicep curl it down to the floor first). To move the bar, tip it on one end so it’s standing straight up and down. Then, grab it with one hand positioned high on the bar and one positioned low, and pull it into your body and carry it around that way.

4. Clip in—Somewhere around your barbell should be two little metal clips, which hold any weight plates you use in place and keep them from rattling around—or worse, falling off—during your workout. To use them, first slide on all of your weight plates, then squeeze the clip’s handles to widen the circle. After a little squeeze, you should be able to fit the circle over the end of the barbell.