

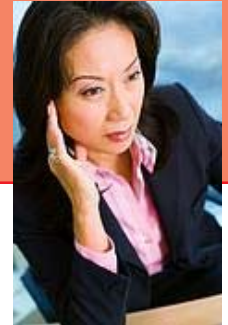
The Wellness Exchange



A Publication of
BUSINESS HEALTH SERVICESSM
Solutions for a Healthier WorkplaceSM

For more information call 1-800-765-3277 or visit www.bhsonline.com

Are The Holidays Giving You A Headache?



The holidays are traditionally a time of joy, excitement, and good cheer. However, for some people, all the celebrations, family gatherings, and other activities can also cause excessive stress and tension – two key triggers for the onset of headaches.

Even if you don't normally suffer from headaches, the holiday season can make you feel as if you've had a non-stop headache from November through January. To battle holiday headaches, the National Headache Foundation offers these tips:

Take extra steps to prevent headaches when traveling. Pack extra medication, take your own sleeping pillow, make flexible plans, and get plenty of rest. Talk to your doctor about needed adjustments to your medications for high altitudes, time zone changes, or different climates.



Make checklists. Compile a list of everything that must be done and divide the tasks among all family members to lighten the load on one person.

Be aware of smoke and perfume filled rooms. According to the NHF, both are typical celebration environments that can trigger headaches. If possible, get some fresh air or find an area that is relatively smoke and perfume free.

Avoid skipping meals. Empty stomachs can spur headaches. If you're unable to follow your normal eating pattern during the holidays, pack healthy snacks like fresh fruit or whole-wheat crackers to nibble on when you're hungry. Avoid foods such as ripe cheeses, processed meats, and chocolate, which may trigger headaches for some people.

Nearly one in four people said they have more headaches during the Winter holiday season than any other time of the year.

Avoid last-minute shopping. Crowded stores and long lines can trigger tension-type headaches. Utilize catalog or online shopping as stress-free options. Also, start shopping early and ask for a holiday wish list in advance to make your shopping simpler.

Keep normal sleeping patterns. Limit the number of late-night parties and gatherings you attend. A change of your sleep routine can trigger headaches.

Schedule personal time. Plan to visit friends, take a long walk, and

give yourself a break from crowded places. Maintain realistic expectations about your holiday visits.

For more information on ways to avoid and cope with headaches, visit www.headaches.org

According to the National Headache Foundation, headache sufferers can take an active role in managing their pain. Here are several strategies for pulling the plug on headache pain:

1. Maintain a regular sleep/wake cycle. Go to sleep at the same time every night and wake up the same time each morning.
2. Use hot or cold packs. Place a heating pad on the base of your neck or a cold pack on your forehead. A warm or cool shower may also be helpful.
3. Practice deep breathing. Slowly inhale through your nose, filling your lungs with fresh air, and slowly exhale through your mouth to help you relax.
4. Keep a log of foods that trigger your headaches. See if removing these foods from your diet reduces your headaches. Remember not to skip meals.
5. Supplement your diet. Some headache sufferers may have a low magnesium level. Talk to your doctor about taking a supplement.
6. Get a massage. Some studies suggest massage can decrease headache frequency and promote relaxation to relieve stress.



If you begin experiencing more frequent or severe headaches during the holidays, call your doctor for an accurate diagnosis and treatment tips.

Minimizing Holiday Weight Gain

For more information call 1-800-765-3277 or visit www.bhsonline.com



It's that time of year when extra calories lurk around every corner. Wherever you go, whatever you do, food always seems to be the focus. Cookies, chocolates, fruit cake, eggnog, holiday breads and a myriad of other 'goodies' can be seen in the kitchen, on the coffee table, at the office, grocery store, drugstore, friend's home... even your

doctor's office! All of these extras can add up, and if you're like most Americans, you'll put on a pound or two (or more!) by New Year's Day.

So what's the harm in a little holiday weight gain, especially if it's just a pound? According to researchers at the National Institutes of Health, most Americans never lose the weight they gain during the winter holidays. The pounds add up year after year, making holiday weight gain an important factor in adult obesity - a risk factor for heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and other serious health problems.

Don't worry! The festivities don't have to be eliminated or avoided. You can have a fabulous time while maintaining your weight and your fitness regimen. **Moderation is the secret** to achieving a fun and healthy holiday season.

With a moderate approach both to what you eat (or don't eat) and how much exercise you do (or don't do), you can avoid packing on extra weight **and** also partake in all the fun of the season. So this season, get a head start on your New Year's resolution and start losing the pounds before January.

You may be setting yourself up for failure if you are expecting to lose weight during the holidays. Instead try to be realistic and work towards maintaining your weight. If you weigh the same on January 1 as you did on November 25, you're already better off than most of the population.



Here are some tips to help you during those hectic holiday weeks:

1. Create a plan. Before the holidays arrive, create a plan for incorporating fitness and good nutrition into your daily routine. Evaluate your holiday schedule and determine how much time you will realistically have to devote to exercise and eating healthy meals.

2. Never go to a party hungry. Instead of starving yourself and then filling up on high-calorie, high-fat foods at the party, take the edge off your hunger beforehand by eating high-fiber, low-calorie foods. While at the party, try to limit your intake of high-fat foods and eat more of the low-fat items like fresh fruits and vegetables.

3. When presented with a large variety of food options, it's tempting to want to eat everything. Rather than eating one large slice of chocolate cake or a huge plate of meatballs, select a sampling of bite size pieces of several of the desert or appetizer offerings. This way you get the enjoyment of trying many different foods without overeating.



4. Avoid wasting calories on alcoholic beverages. The average alcoholic drink contains 150-200 calories per glass. Indulge in just 2-3 drinks and you've drunk the equivalent of calories in an entire meal. If you partake in these beverages, choose wisely. For example, instead of having a full glass of wine, try mixing half a glass of wine with sparkling water or with a diet soda. This will help cut your calories in half.

5. When running errands or shopping, be sure to pack some healthy snacks to have on-hand. Then after you work-up a big appetite, you won't be tempted to grab something at the mall food court or the fast food restaurant on the way home.

6. Exercise at home. You'll be more inclined to follow-through on your exercise commitment if you don't have to drive somewhere to do your workout. Plus, you won't waste any time on driving, parking, changing in the locker room or waiting to use equipment.

7. Don't put your fitness goals on hold until the New Year. If you can't exercise as often during this time period as you normally do, adjust appropriately. Don't use the excuse that since you don't have time for your full workout you just won't workout at all. Instead accept your limited availability and simply reduce the frequency and/or duration of your exercise. It's much better to cut your fitness time in half than to completely eliminate it.

Hopefully these tips can help you find the balance between healthy eating and enjoying the holiday festivities. Remember, moderation is the key to starting the New Year without the gift of unwanted pounds.

Have a safe and healthy holiday season!