

MYTHBUSTER MONDAY



Common Belief: Our health goals should be put on the backburner during the holidays.

New Perspective: Finding balance between joy and health during the holidays is key!

For consistency's sake, it was important to me to provide you with a Myth-Buster Monday this month, but I didn't want to hit you with a heavy topic right before the holidays. Instead I thought it would be helpful to keep things light-hearted and introduce a new perspective for you to approach this season of indulgence with, in hopes of keeping you on track towards your health goals. Although it is true that the holidays are a perfect time to indulge in our favorite treats, I am a firm believer in balance and I do not think that food should be the sole focus of the season. I want to encourage you to keep your goals at the forefront and aim to strike a balance between enjoyment and health as this month ends and we enter another new year. I have found that it is important that we refrain from putting our health on the backburner during the holidays as this mindset may lead to a pervasive habit of putting our goals aside when we're faced with temptation. Instead, we ought to learn how to mindfully indulge while staying on course toward our healthiest selves. At the end of the day, that is the goal, right?

Although there are many factors at play during the holidays that make it difficult to adopt new health goals or make large strides towards our existing ones, we should refrain from letting all the wheels come off. I am not suggesting that you deprive yourself during the holidays or miss out on all your favorite treats, but that you choose them wisely, eat them mindfully, and reserve your indulgences for those true treats that you don't get to enjoy all year long, like grandmas famous pecan pie. You deserve to sustain your healthy habits, like incorporating physical activity into every day and making better food choices, just as much as you deserve that slice of pie

Shifting our focus away from food allows more time for us to focus on the more meaningful things that come with the holidays, like spending time with and showing gratitude for our loved ones. The joy we receive from eating, although some would argue is worth it, is fleeting, and the consequences of repeated mindless overindulgences during the holidays stay with us far longer than the joy from that indulgence lasts. I can assure you that you will come out on the other side of the season with gratitude for both the sacrifices you made to stay on course towards your healthiest you and the permission you granted yourself to mindfully enjoy yourself. In my personal and professional experience with coaching clients through a mix of health challenges, the magic happens when we learn balance.

In case you missed our Thanksgiving Myth-Buster, I'd like to share some healthy habits to adopt this holiday season to encourage balance:

- 1. Eat Breakfast:** While most people think it makes sense to save up calories for big holiday meals, eating in the morning can give you more control over your appetite and allow you to make better food and beverage choices throughout the day. Start your day with a balanced, protein-and-fiber-rich breakfast to help stave off the afternoon hunger and subsequent overindulgence.
- 2. Stay Active:** Finding time to exercise in the midst of the holiday madness can be a challenge. Try incorporating a morning workout, short walks throughout the day, or an active game with your friends and family to avoid long periods of being sedentary.
- 3. Lighten Up:** Try healthier alternatives to your favorite holiday staples. For example, roasted root vegetables over sweet potato casserole, side salad over dinner rolls, sugar substitutes like monk fruit in place of sugar, or reducing the amount of sugar used in homemade desserts altogether.
- 4. Start Smart:** A good way to avoid overeating is to fill up on the most nutrient-dense and filling meal items first, such as protein-rich animal foods and fiber-rich vegetables and salads topped with healthy fats like avocado or olive oil dressing.
- 5. Watch your Portions:** As previously mentioned, the holidays are certainly not a time to deprive yourself of your favorite treats, but they don't need to be a time to overindulge in them either. Select small portions of the holiday favorites that only come around once a year rather than items you already enjoy all year long.
- 6. Skip the Seconds:** Try to resist the temptation to go back for second helpings and instead save room for a delectable dessert, or limit your seconds to the guilt-free dishes like vegetables and salad.
- 7. Go Easy on Alcohol:** Alcohol calories can add up quickly. To limit these calories and stay hydrated, opt for a glass of wine or a wine spritzer and enjoy sparkling water between alcoholic drinks.
- 8. Engage in a mindfulness activity:** Set aside time throughout the day to remind yourself what the holidays are all about and the importance of remaining healthy during them. Focus more of your attention on cherishing quality time with your loved ones rather than on eating.
- 9. Prioritize sleep.** Due to the stress and business of the holidays, it can be hard to get a restful night's sleep. In a sleep deficit, food preferences are altered toward energy-dense foods, hunger is increased, fat metabolism is decreased and the stress response is increased leading to a decreased basal metabolic rate. Aim for 7-9 hours of restful sleep per night to ensure you are avoiding the consequences of sleep debt.

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