



Mason County

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EXTENSION

WSU Making A Difference: Tips on Keeping Healthy Through the Holiday Season

The holiday season is fast-approaching. Though the season is filled with fun and excitement, it can also be filled with very real stressors...healthy eating blown, careful budgets blown, routine schedules blown...all of which can negatively impact your health. Here are some tips I hope will help you make it through the next couple of months with smiles on your faces, money in your pocket, and maybe a good story or two.

Eat healthfully and well: Almost any food can fit into a healthy eating pattern, as long as it's eaten in moderation. The trick is to choose wisely and well. Temptation is everywhere during the holidays and often starts in our own kitchens. One way to cook healthier, without sacrificing taste, is to substitute ingredients. For example, use egg substitutes or egg whites for whole eggs (two whites for one whole egg). If a recipe calls for oil or butter, you can try substituting fruit puree instead. Applesauce is often used for this. Cutting back on sugar added to pies or other baked goods works well, as does using low-fat dairy instead of full-fat cream in sauces and dressings. One word of advice: change one ingredient at a time to make sure you like the changes made before moving on to another. Little changes can make big differences over time. You will be amazed to find healthful food does not need to taste like cardboard! For some tasty recipes that won't break your budget go to: <https://whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/>

Be mindful in your eating: When we're running off our feet to get everything done, it's often too easy to gobble down fast, high fat, high sugar, high sodium snacks to stave off those gnawing hunger pangs. One easy fix is to make snack packs of whole grain trail mix with lots of dried fruits and nuts that you can grab on your way out the door. The whole grains will keep you feeling fuller longer and give you the energy you need to accomplish all the tasks before you, while the nuts will provide a protein boost. The same idea applies to snack bags of fruits and vegetables for you and your family. Crisp fruits and veggies are satisfying and refreshing, and will help you save money while out and about. When you *do* eat sit down to eat, either at home, at a party, or in a restaurant, take your time and savor your meal. You'll enjoy your food more and probably eat less.

At holiday parties, there are several ways to have your cake and eat it, too! Take small portions of the foods you really like, and pass on those that you don't. A sliver of dessert can satisfy your sweet tooth just as well as a full piece. Try leaving some of the crust of your favorite pie on the plate, or sample a fruit plate instead of dessert. Eating a healthy mini-meal before attending festivities can also help you avoid overindulging later. You might also try bringing a healthy, yet

tasty, dish to share at a gathering, which will be appreciated by many who are also trying to eat healthfully during the holidays.

Budget your time to include physical activity and plenty of sleep: Good health encompasses more than just healthy eating. Too often during the holiday season physical activity decreases as our normal routines fall by the wayside. Physical activity, however, keeps our minds sharp, creates a feeling of well-being, and relaxes tense muscles. Once you're feeling good and relaxed, it's much easier to get a restful night's sleep. Restful sleep helps us cope with the increased bustle of the holiday season.

Throw perfection out the window and laugh: No matter how well we plan, no matter how hard we try, our 'perfect' holiday meals often turn out to be anything but perfect. So what if we planned dinner for 3:00 and it's finally on the table at 5:30? My solution-throw perfection out the window along with whatever was ruined. No one will go hungry and everyone will remember the wonderful time spent with family and friends. Some of the best stories around my holiday celebrations recount: "The Incredible Exploding and Shrinking Lemon Meringue Pie", "The Bird's On Fire" Thanksgiving, and "When the Holiday Ham Skids Across The Kitchen Floor"! Sometime you laugh to keep from crying...sometimes you laugh just because hindsight shows the hilarity of the disastrous moment. 'Dining' on these stories feeds the soul for years to come.

For important food safety tips, go to: [Foodsafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov)

Let's Talk Turkey: https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/poultry-preparation/lets-talk-turkey/CT_Index

Kitchen Time Savers: <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/budget-time-savers>

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