

# Wellness @ GSU

## Healthy Inspirations from Advocate at Work

### Advocate Health Center at Governors State University

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From the Health Center of  
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Happy holidays GSU! Here are a few helpful tips from the American Heart Association (2017) to help you remain healthy and mindful as we celebrate this time of year.

**Don't skip meals-** Be sure to try and eat close to your usual meal times and

avoid skipping meals to help prevent overeating. If invited to a party, offer to bring a healthy dish to give yourself options.

**Eat smaller portions-** To help avoid overeating, try using a smaller plate. First fill your plate with healthier options such as vegetables before picking your entrees. Also eating a salad before your main meal may help you to eat fewer calories. Eat slowly to help yourself enjoy your meal, which may lead to you feeling fuller sooner.

**Keep moving-** Remaining physically active during the holiday season can help to prevent you from eating more than usual. It may also help to reduce stress. While at a party or event, be sure to walk

around to help you remain active while socializing.

**Limit alcohol-** Avoid or limit your alcohol intake to decrease your caloric intake. If you do choose to drink, be sure to have food with it. Doing so decreases the absorption rate of the alcohol and can also help you to feel fuller faster.

The holidays can be a stressful time for yourself. If you do slip up with your meals, remember that it is okay.

**Stress tips during the holidays-**  
Remember to be proactive but to set realistic expectations for yourself. Keep things in perspective and focus on what is important to you. If feeling overwhelmed, step away and take time for yourself. Reach out to someone though if still feeling stressed.

### This Virus Still Kills Thousands Each Year



**World Aids Day is December 1<sup>st</sup>.** Do you know your HIV status? HIV, the virus that leads to AIDS, weakens a person's immune system by destroying special immunity cells (CD-4/T cells) that help to fight disease

and infection. It is estimated that 1.1 million people are living with HIV within the United States (CDC, 2018). Of this group, about 15% or 1 in 7 people do not know that they are infected (CDC, 2018).

HIV has cost America too much for too long and remains a significant public health issue:

- More than 700,000 American lives have been lost to HIV since 1981.
- More than 1.1 million Americans are currently living with

HIV and many more are at risk of HIV infection.

- While new HIV diagnoses have declined significantly from their peak, progress on further reducing them has stalled with an estimated 40,000 Americans being newly diagnosed each year. Without intervention another 400,000 Americans will be newly diagnosed over 10 years despite the available tools to prevent infections.
- The U.S. government spends \$20 billion in annual direct health expenditures for HIV prevention and care.

There is a real risk of an HIV resurgence due to several factors, including injection drug use and diagnostic complacency among healthcare providers.

Protect yourself and others by knowing your HIV status, schedule an appointment for testing and additional educational information at the Advocate Aurora Health Clinic.

## Simple Tips To Be Present and Truly Enjoy the Holidays

The holidays can be both a joyful and a stressful time. We often rush right through the month of December going to parties, work events, family gatherings, and more. Before we know it, it's the beginning of a new year. This year, take time to slow down, live in the moment and really enjoy the holidays.

This intentional act of being present has many health benefits, including increased happiness, feeling calm and being more relaxed. Here are some tips to help you stay present this month.

**Put down your phone.** Phones can be a great way to access information and stay connected, but they can also be a big distraction. Research shows that too much time using social media can actually be harmful to our mental health. When we're distracted by what's on our phone, we're paying less attention to the people around us. If you're at a party or family gathering, try putting your phone away, and encourage others to do the same.

**Keep important routines.** It can be easy to get out of our daily routines during the holidays, but it's important to continue those that help lower your stress and maintain your health. Determine which routines are important for you to feel your best, and make those non-negotiables. Whether it's being physically active, spending time alone, eating (mostly) healthy meals or something completely different, keeping these routines can help you feel energized throughout the month.

**Have a conversation and really listen.** Sit down with a family member or friend and spend time having a meaningful conversation. Often when speaking to someone, we're forming our response while they're still talking. Instead, take the time to

really listen and reflect back what they're saying. You'll be less distracted if you're completely focused on the conversation; plus, it's a good way to build connections.

**Listen to your body.** Practice self-compassion during the holidays by tuning in to what your body needs. Do you feel exhausted after a weekend of family gatherings? Take some time to rest. Starting to feel a little stressed out? Try going for a walk. Taking care of yourself first allows you to be there fully for others. Finally, remember that it's okay to say no to things that don't support your health and well-being.

**Go with the flow.** A lot of stress during the holidays comes from feeling like there is a gap between expectations and reality. Instead of worrying about things not going according to plan, remember what is most important. If you find yourself feeling stressed in the moment, try naming what you're grateful for to help bring you back to the present. Letting go of the need for everything to be perfect allows us to enjoy the present moment rather than feeling anxious.

**Practice mindfulness.** Mindfulness doesn't have to include yoga or meditation, although it certainly can. Something as simple as focusing on your breath can bring you back to the present. One easy way is to take five long, slow, deep breaths. Inhale and focus on the air entering your lungs. Feel your chest expand. Exhale fully and focus solely on the air leaving your body. Repeat five times. If you're interested in more meditation, you can try out apps like Headspace and Calm.

## Holidays Meals Made Healthy



The holidays don't have to be synonymous with weight gain, and this year, instead of celebrating with foods rich in butter and fat, celebrate with a dish rich in nutrients. While eating healthy is important, it's also necessary to pay attention to portion sizes. Eating giant portions of even the healthiest food can make a person gain weight, cautions Michelle Waspi, dietitian at Advocate Trinity Hospital in Chicago.

"You can be cautious about portion sizes by using a smaller size plate when serving meals rather than your average size dinner plate," says Waspi. "Also, putting the food away in the refrigerator after serving may aid in avoiding the ease of second helpings."

Check out these healthy recipes from across the web:

**Healthier mashed sweet potatoes (Food.com)**  
Potatoes are the quintessential comfort food that are high in fiber and can help lower blood cholesterol and glucose levels. Mashed sweet potatoes can be a great addition to every holiday feast. To make this recipe you will need:

4 medium sweet potatoes peeled and cubed  
1 tbsp. butter  
3 crushed garlic cloves  
½ cup of 1 percent milk  
Sour cream

Salt and pepper to taste  
In large pot, boil sweet potatoes in salted water until tender, drain in a colander. Meanwhile, melt butter and sauté garlic until lightly golden. Return potatoes to pan, add

milk and sour cream; mash until smooth and creamy. Adjust salt and pepper to taste. Serve and enjoy.

### Healthy strawberry shortcake muffins (Dashingdish.com)

Try this delicious dessert which contains only 93 calories and are very simple to make.

Ingredients:  
2½ cups oats  
1 cup low-fat Greek yogurt  
2 eggs  
1 cup sugar  
1 ½ teaspoons of baking powder  
½ teaspoon of baking soda  
1½ cups of diced strawberries  
1 tsp lemon juice

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Line 12 muffin tins with foil liners and place all ingredients except strawberries in a blender or food processor. Blend until smooth. Pour into medium sized bowl. Stir in strawberries. Pour into cupcake liners then divide remaining slices of strawberries over top of each muffin. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until toothpick comes out clean.

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