

Leyla Weighs In: Five tips for staying well during the holiday season



It's important to maintain your self-care regimen, especially this time of year when stress levels tend to run high. Here's how:

- 1. Eat right:** Sugar, white flour, and factory-made trans fats wreak havoc on the immune and cardiovascular systems. Eliminate them from your diet or at the very least keep your consumption of them to a minimum over the Holidays. Eat twice as many vegetables as you do fruits. Drink water, not juice or soda. Keep your intake of alcohol moderate and have a glass of water or seltzer with a twist between rounds of cocktails.
- 2. Exercise:** The *prescription* is four or more days a week. Give equal time to strength training as you do cardio. Also, step up your cardio routine with high-intensity interval training (HIIT). You can shorten your time on the treadmill by incorporating HIIT.
- 3. Get enough sleep every night:** There's no such thing as "catching up" on sleep on the weekend. What's lost is lost. The magic number for most is between seven and eight hours a night. You should wake up feeling rested and refreshed in the morning. Not getting enough shut-eye suppresses immunity and drives up cortisol. A high cortisol level will thin skin, diminish bone mineral density and keep you in

perpetual fat-storage mode.

4. Get some sun: While hard to do outside since it's cold here in the northeast, moderate use of a tanning bed can ensure adequate vitamin D levels. If you don't want the UV exposure from a tanning bed, take a daily supplement of at least 2,000 IU vitamin D3 every day in addition to your multi-vitamin and mineral supplement. Vitamin D is the "antibiotic" vitamin—especially helpful during cold and flu season.

5. Get happy: We all experience stress in our lives but key to effectively dealing with it is to change our *reaction* to it. Chronic stress not only wears us down mentally, it also suppresses immunity and propagates inflammation. Exposure to chronic stress can clog arteries. Commit to creating more positive life experiences and remove yourself from toxic situations and people wherever possible. In fact, this may be the best time of year to reflect on this.

Wishing you a Joyful Holiday Season!