

[IMAGE]

3 Strategies to Survive the Unhealthy Holidays

By Editorial Staff

Feeling more than a little discouraged in the aftermath of your latest holiday overindulgence – the Thanksgiving feast? You're not alone in feeling that way, but that's not the best news. While you can expect December to be just as, if not more challenging to your diet and fitness goals, the best news is there are easy strategies you can adopt to ensure you make it to January – and beyond – without developing a snowman-sized waistline. Here are three ways to enjoy the holidays without abandoning your healthy mission.

1. Stick to it: With increasing opportunities to do anything *except* schedule a trip to the gym, it's too easy to tell yourself, "I'll take December off and then get back on track in 2014." Tempting, but for too many people, that month-long "break" becomes a way of life that bleeds well into the new year.

Success Strategy: Scaling back is better than stopping altogether. If holiday time constraints put a dent in your fitness schedule, don't fret; going to the gym 2-3 days a week in December, instead of 4-5, is perfectly fine. And keep in mind that you can do countless toning, tightening and cardio exercises from the comfort of your own home.

start - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark **2. Believe in balance:** When it comes to diet, stay strict ... so you can "cheat" without feeling bad about it. December provides ample opportunity to indulge, from holiday cakes, pies and other sweets to calorie-bursting meals. Maintaining a strict diet when you're not at a holiday party, dinner, etc., will remove the guilt when indulgence rears its delectable head, and help you avoid falling off the diet wagon altogether.

Success Strategy: Don't avoid the holiday treats, but don't adopt them as your sole source of nutrition, either. Eat as many nutrient-bursting vegetables as possible (which will also fill you up), and limit fat and sugar intake on your "non-celebration" days. And don't starve yourself all day in advance of a holiday feast; that's just asking for trouble.

3. Pick a partner: It's good advice during the other 11 months of the year and it's even better advice in December. Pick a partner to help "survive" the holiday season with some semblance of your diet and

exercise regimen intact. There's no shame in admitting you can't go it alone, especially when holiday work deadlines, gift shopping and other December events turn your already stressful life into a pressure cooker of exasperation. Anyone would be tempted to "give up" this month – but not if you're got a partner who's committed to helping you both succeed.

Success Strategy: Get a family member, friend or co-worker on board with your healthy holiday goals. (You can be their motivator in return.) Exercise together, motivate one another and stay in close contact by e-mail, text message, phone, etc., throughout the month – and particularly when holiday indulgence opportunities are knocking at your door and testing your will.

What good is a celebration if you feel guilty about it afterward? This holiday season, enjoy yourself sensibly while keeping both eyes on the prize – a lifetime of health and wellness. Talk to your doctor for more great ideas to help you end 2013 on a healthy note and start 2014 the same way.

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