

Aging Healthfully Newsletter

Illinois Department on Aging

Healthy Holiday Swaps

With the holidays in full swing, comforting foods, meals, and desserts with rich ingredients are often the traditional fare.

Individuals with diabetes, high blood pressure, or high triglycerides may have an even more difficult time managing these health conditions during the holidays because of the types of foods and beverages that are typically consumed.

While many older adults look forward to indulging in these foods, there are some simple swaps that can be made to recipes or choices for meals to make them a bit healthier without sacrificing the flavor or worsening these health conditions.

Swap this in a recipe or meal...	For that...	Nutrition Savings/Gains
½ cup Full Fat Sour Cream	½ cup Plain Non-Fat Greek Yogurt	Savings of 177 Calories and 23 grams of Fat
1 cup Spaghetti Pasta	1 cup Zucchini “Noodles”	Savings of 200 Calories and 315mg Sodium
1 cup Mashed Potatoes	1 cup Mashed Cauliflower	Savings of 27 grams of Carbohydrates and 47% More Vitamin C
½ cup Green Bean Casserole	½ cup Sautéed Green Beans	Savings of 55 Calories, 3 grams of Fat
½ cup Sweet Potato Casserole	½ cup Baked Sweet Potatoes	Savings of 160 Calories and 364mg Sodium
1 Slice Homestyle Apple Pie	Baked Cinnamon Apple with low-fat granola topping	Savings of 313 Calories, 25 grams of Fat, and 331mg Sodium
1 cup Eggnog	1 cup Dark Chocolate Cocoa	Savings of 185 Calories and 18 grams of Fat



Ways to Stay Active During the Cold Winter Months

When it is cold outside, our bodies ache and we may not feel as energetic as we did in the spring/summer months. It can be hard to stay motivated to exercise during the winter season and it can really be a challenge to exercise outside when the roads and sidewalks are icy.

How often should you exercise?

Most older adults should do aerobic exercises such as riding a bicycle, walking briskly, dancing, or swimming for at least 30 minutes, 5 days out of the week as well as balance/strength training exercises such as lifting light weights or Tai Chi for at least 10 minutes, 2 days a week.

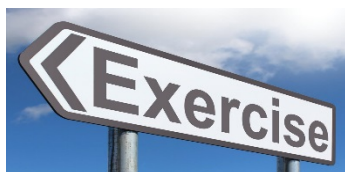


It is important to start out slowly if you are new to exercising at this level and gradually work towards this goal. **Check with your doctor prior to starting a new exercise regimen to see what is safe and best for you and your health!**

There are many benefits to exercising year-round, but especially during the gloomy winter months.

Benefits of Exercise:

- Staying physically active helps you to continue to remain independent in your own home.
- Reduces feelings of anxiety and depression or the “blues.”
- Keeping physically active helps to keep your mind sharp by improving cognitive function.
- Helps build and maintain the strength of your bones, joints, and muscles – balance and strength training exercises may even help to lower your risk of falling by 40%.
- Exercise may help to keep away unwanted weight gain, which is associated with a variety of health conditions such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, and certain types of cancers.
- Helps improve the quality of your sleep.
- Aerobic exercises help improve the health of your heart and exercise in general helps to control blood sugars for people with diabetes.
- Helps to reduce arthritis pain. Studies have shown that older adults with osteoarthritis experienced less pain and were more flexible after approximately 4 months of doing strength training exercises.



Ideas to keep you physically active inside the comfort of your home or backyard:

- Try online exercise videos such as yoga, arthritis-friendly workouts, chair exercises, Tai Chi, or an evidence-based exercise program offered near you.
- Cleaning the house (dusting, mopping, vacuuming, etc.) can help keep your body active as well as keep you busy when you feel stuck inside your home.
- Dancing to your favorite music can be a fun way to be physically active and can be done with friends over video conferencing or the telephone.
- Raking leaves or shoveling snow are great moderate forms of exercise – Just be sure to check with your doctor to see if these types of exercise are safe for you.
- If you have stairs in your home or that lead into your home, start with a few minutes of walking up and down the stairs while holding on to the railing. Over time work up to adding more minutes as you feel comfortable.

Note: do not try doing this in the winter if your stairs are slick or covered in ice.

- Try doing wall pushups, arm raises, hand gripping exercises, or lifting soup cans (or light free weights) in your home during television commercials – this exercise can really add up during an hour-long show!



Attachments:

- 10 Tips to Make Healthier Holiday Choices
- MyPlate Holiday Makeover
- **Recipes:** Roasted Brussels Sprouts and Apples; Southwestern Chicken and White Bean Soup

References:

<https://www.ncoa.org/blog/stayactivewinter/>

<https://www.healthinaging.org/a-z-topic/physical-activity/basic-facts>

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<https://www2.illinois.gov/aging/programs/nutrition/Pages/nutrition.aspx>