

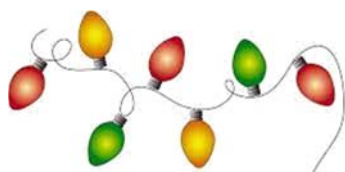
Newsflash

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Wise Choices Healthy Holiday Eating

- Enjoy a healthy breakfast to help prevent overeating later on.
- Eat what's best for you first. Fill at least half your plate with fresh fruit and veggies. You'll have less room for the rest.
- Bring a healthy dish to the party.
- Fruit by itself makes an excellent dessert. Try placing a bowl of clementines or apples on the holiday table.
- Avoid beverages high in calories and sugar.
- Keep a food journal to track what you're eating.
- Instead of focusing on food, spend time with family, friends, and activities.
- Stay positive. If you eat more on some days, eat less on others. If you miss a workout, exercise a little longer the next day.



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More Than Winter Dryness

These skin conditions may need a doctor's help.

Dry, itchy skin is a common companion when the humidity drops, especially as we get older. The oil-producing glands that lubricate skin shrink and don't work as efficiently. But when is it just dry skin, and when is it something that needs treatment? Here's what you need to know about three skin conditions that can flare up in the winter:

ECZEMA. More than 30 million Americans have the patches of red, thick, scaly, itchy skin of eczema. Older adults are at higher risk for asteatotic eczema, which often causes intense dryness and itchiness on the lower legs. Eczema crops up common in people with asthma or hay fever, but stress, dry heat, allergens, and fragrances and dyes in household products can set it off, too.

DIY care Moisturize several times per day (see "Cold Weather Skin Soothers" in the column to the left), and run a humidifier when home heat is on. Use dye- and scent-free detergents and soaps, and wash new clothes and bedding before use. Occasional use of over-the-counter hydrocortisone cream helps calm the itch.

See a doctor if you see little change after several weeks of self-care or you have severe itching or patches that blister or ooze. The doctor might prescribe a steroid cream or, in severe cases, an oral immunosuppressant for the itch. Phototherapy, which uses ultraviolet light to tame inflammation, is an option, too.

PSORIASIS. An estimated 6.7 million Americans have this chronic condition, marked by flaky, itchy, slightly elevated patches covered with silvery skin cells. These "plaques" develop when skin cells grow too rapidly, flaring up when "something triggers the immune system to become overactive. Triggers can include stress, skin injury or infection, allergies, and certain medications. And "scratching an itchy spot can create new psoriasis in that area".

DIY care To erase itching and loosen dead skin, soak for 15 minutes in a lukewarm bath to which you've added baby oil, oilated oatmeal, or Epsom salt. A shampoo or an OTC cream with salicylic acid can soften plaques; one with coal tar can reduce discomfort. You can also subdue itching with OTC hydrocortisone cream.

See a doctor if self-care doesn't help. Your doctor might prescribe a biologic drug for inflammation, methotrexate to slow skin-cell growth, or phototherapy.

ROSACEA. A chronic condition that's more common after age 30, rosacea can lead to redness, bumps, and pustules, usually on the face. Some people experience dryness, stinging, itching, and burning. The skin of rosacea patients is very sensitive. Triggers include cold or hot weather, indoor heat, stress, sun, wind alcohol, hot baths, vigorous exercise, and spicy food.

DIY care Use a gentle facial cleanser and a gentle moisturizer before bed, and wear a broad-spectrum sunscreen for sensitive skin with an SPF of at least 30.

See a doctor if your symptoms don't resolve with DIY care or if they cause discomfort or emotional distress. Prescription treatments might include a topical anti-inflammatory cream or an oral antibiotic for more severe inflammation and redness. Laser or light therapy can be used to reduce redness.

Looking to the New Year Resolution Ideas You Can Actually Make Stick

"I'm going to lose weight and get healthy in the new year!" How many times have we said that over the years? Though the new year is a great time for a health reset, fad diets, extreme workout schedules, and over-the-top goals send us right back to where we started. So skip the extremes when it comes to setting health-related goals. Set yourself up for success with resolutions that are completely manageable and just might spur you on to loftier goals!

Upgrade your dessert. If you're craving something sweet after dinner, you should have it. If you want to cut back on sugar and still satisfy that craving, dilute the sweet stuff with something like nuts or seeds. Instead of reaching for a chocolate bar, try chocolate-covered almonds, chocolate dipped banana or pineapple, or chocolate chips mixed with popcorn, pistachios, or both.

Set a bedtime alarm. Most of us get less than the minimum seven hours of sleep we need. Though we can't usually sleep later, we can go to bed earlier. The best way to ensure we do this is to set a bedtime alarm. Set the alarm 45 minutes before "lights out" and start your wind-down routine. This can also serve as a reminder to turn off the TV and close up your electronics.

Check in with yourself mid-meal. Dieting is unrealistic when you make it super restrictive. Learn to tune into signs of hunger and don't ignore them. Sip water between bites to help yourself slow down and eat more mindfully. Pause for a gut-check halfway through your meal to note how you're feeling physically and really taste what you're chewing. Put down your fork, take a deep breath, and ask yourself how full you are and how much more food you think you need to be satisfied.

Eat veggies at breakfast. As an opportunity to squeeze in vegetables, top your toast with mashed avocado, add a handful of baby spinach or sautéed grated sweet potatoes to your scrambled eggs, or stir grated zucchini into pancake batter or shredded carrots into your oatmeal. Think outside the box of your standard breakfast foods...breakfast is just a meal like any other.

Walk to every destination within one mile. The more physical activity you can fit into your day, the better. If something is within one mile, try to walk instead of drive. If you go to a large shopping complex, park at the back of the parking lot and walk the stores. Walk to the farthest point first (while you're at your most energetic) so you'll be closer at the end of your trip. Walking instead of driving can help you live longer, improve your mood and reduce your risk for heart disease, diabetes and certain types of cancer.

Exercise for a few minutes. Short workouts can help you meet that recommended "2 ½ hours of moderate-intensity physical activity each week." This can also break down to 30 minutes five days a week. However, research backs up the power of short workouts. One study found that 13 minutes of weight training three times a week is enough to build strength, while another shows that just five minutes a day of running is all it takes to reduce your risk of death from cardiovascular disease. The bottom line is that any exercise is better than none at all.



Burn Calories with Video Games

This holiday season, why not join your kids or grandkids playing their new video games! The American Heart Association teamed up with Nintendo to promote active versions like Wii Fit Plus and Wii Sports Resort for people of any age who don't get 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week.

Two small studies suggest that the devices – which use wireless, motion-sensitive, handheld controllers to interact with your TV – can help burn calories and improve balance, which might help prevent falls.

Twenty-four people ages 66 to 74 were studied, it found that they burned an average of 103 calories during 30 minutes of Wii bowling and 70 calories playing Wii baseball. A second study of 31 adults 61 to 89, found an improvement in balance after four weeks of playing games that emphasize balance, such as skiing.

Previous tests of the Wii Fit concluded that while the devices don't offer much of a workout to people who are already fit, they might motivate people to become more active. But caution is necessary. The devices might interfere with pacemakers and, like real sports, can cause injuries. And it's a good idea to talk to your doctor if you're middle-aged or older and just starting to exercise.

