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Holiday Health
By Kent Pegg



Here come the holidays! That great time of year that's filled with fun, family, and festivities. Unfortunately, it can also be filled with food, fat, and failed exercise programs.

The next few weeks will, undoubtedly, be the toughest weeks of the year to maintain your regular exercise and nutrition habits. Many challenges will come between now and the end of the year, and you'll need to work hard to stay in shape or, at least, prevent from falling too far out of shape.

Thanksgiving will be the first challenge. But, it really doesn't have to be a bad eating day. Many of the foods on a traditional Thanksgiving dinner table are actually good nutritional choices.

Turkey is a good source of protein and the white meat doesn't bring a great deal of fat along with it. Sweet potatoes are a good energy carbohydrate that have been used by fitness enthusiasts for years. Just make sure you skip the extra butter and brown sugar.

Possibly the biggest Thanksgiving pitfall is portion size. So much focus is placed on the initial meal that it's almost impossible to prevent overeating. Try your best to limit your portions of heavy sauces and gravies and eat a variety of foods.

Remember, part of the joy of Thanksgiving is knowing that you'll have plenty of leftovers to snack on throughout the day. Enjoy several smaller meals and you'll limit your total calorie intake and feel better about the day.

Once you've made it through Thanksgiving, you've still got many roadblocks ahead on your path to holiday fitness. Next come the holiday parties and get-togethers.

Potlucks mean pigging out. Buffets are belly busters. And cookie parties are calorie catastrophes. You'll need to look ahead and know when potential nutritional dangers are coming. For instance, if you have two parties coming up on the weekend, try to eat well during the week to minimize the impact.

That goes for snacking at work as well. More cookies and cakes will be appearing around the office. Pick and choose to avoid the higher fat and calo-

rie options. And consider making your own goodies to take in and share. That way you'll know for sure what you're getting and your coworkers may appreciate it too.

And, it's not just a change in eating habits that present a challenge. There will also be more time spent shopping, attending get-togethers, and traveling, meaning you'll have less time for your regular workouts.

For the next couple months, take every opportunity you have to get to the gym, even if it's not your regular workout day or time. You can bet there will be times when something comes up to keep you out of the gym during your regular sessions so these extra workouts will be needed.

Even if you only have time for a few sets or some cardio, take advantage of the time whenever it presents itself. And if you can't make it to the gym, take a walk, do some ab work on the floor, or find another way to burn some calories. Every little bit will help.

Whatever you do, try not to take a few weeks off from your regular workout program. Not only will your body suffer during the time off but it'll also struggle for a few weeks after you get back to working out.

So enjoy all that life has to offer this holiday season, but do it in moderation. A little self control and discipline will go a long way to ensuring that, come the first of the year, you'll be as fit and healthy as ever.

Kent Pegg is a certified personal trainer and the owner of the Los Alamos Fitness Center. If you have any questions about the information in this article you can call him at 662-5232.