

Exercise is important during the holidays

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You've already made the commitment to exercise on a regular basis and you're seeing the benefits: an increased feeling of well being, reduced stress, and more energy.

And then along comes the holidays.

On top of your normal daily routines, now there is additional shopping, baking, and holiday parties. Many people tend to forget about exercise and the other healthy habits they incorporate during the rest of the year. Don't make this terrible mistake! Regardless of how busy you are, exercise should continue to be a priority.

Exercise can help relieve holiday stress, in addition to burning all those excess holiday calories. Look at it this way—if you don't take care of yourself, how can you expect to take care of everything and everyone else?

Research has proven that relieving stress with exercise is one of the best ways to improve overall health. Regular exercise provides a significant amount of anti-stress benefits to the human body, including reduced muscle tension, improved cardiovascular function, increased oxygen



levels, and reduced cholesterol and triglyceride levels.

Relieving stress with exercise also burns calories and reduces

body fat. Since most other anti-stress options, such as pharmaceutical drugs, alcohol, and overeating, cause weight

gain, it's obvious exercise is the best option.

Other than burning calories, there is another reason why minimizing stress with exercise helps reduce body fat. Cortisol is a stress hormone released by the body during times of stress. Elevated cortisol levels are to blame for sugar and carb cravings, overeating, and low energy levels. Experts also believe high cortisol production increases the amount of "toxic fat" stored in the body. This type of fat may lead to cardiovascular disease and inflammation-related health problems. Exercise produces chemicals in the body that aid in reducing cortisol production.

Without question, exercise is the best way to deal with physical and mental tension. Unfortunately, many people feel they are too busy to exercise, especially during the holiday season. So get ahead of the fateful New Year's resolution of taking better care of yourself and start today. Your heart, your mind and your body will thank you. **BoB**

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