

Staying Healthy this Christmas

Christmas is a joyful time; however with all the rushing around and over indulgence, many of us feel stressed, rundown, tired and over weight coming into the New Year.

Reduce stress

Plan ahead

Do as much as you can in advance. Do as much of your shopping and Christmas jobs well in advance so you can relax and enjoy the Christmas atmosphere in the run up to the big day.

Just say no

It is important to say no at times and know your limits. It is a trait of many of us to try doing everything. If tasks or commitments are becoming too much of a burden, it is important to learn when to ask for help.

Deep breathing

If you feel yourself getting stressed, you can reduce these feelings by relaxing your muscles and taking deep breaths. Start by inhaling for three seconds, then exhale for a little longer. This will help to remove the older oxygen from your lungs and replace it with fresh oxygen that will improve your circulation and alertness.

Be Realistic in Expectations

Don't expect everything to go exactly as you want them to. In reality, the turkey may be too dry, one of the kids may be unhappy with what Santa brought, or the dog may knock the Christmas tree. Many of these things are out of your control. Worrying will not help. Minor mishaps will happen so take a deep breath when they occur and just do your best to sort it out, you're only human!

B vitamins

Deficiency in the B vitamins is associated with nerve related conditions such as stress, anxiety, depression and irritability. The B vitamins keep the central nervous system functioning well so are important in fighting stress. Anti oxidant vitamins are also important during periods of stress. The body produces more free radicals during stress which affect our immune system. Anti oxidant vitamins such as vitamin C and E prevent free radical damage to the body so are also important during stress. Fruit and vegetables, whole grains, nuts and beans are good sources of B vitamins and antioxidants. If you feel you need an extra boost of B vitamins during the stressful Christmas period, Wheelan's Traditional Tonic can help. It not only boosts energy levels but also fights stress due to its B vitamin content.

Maintain energy levels

Exercise

The benefit of exercise to relieve stress is often underestimated. Exercise releases a chemical called serotonin, which makes you feel happier and less stressed. Exercise also allows you to take out your frustration and anger in a constructive way. During Christmas, we often let our exercise regime fall by the wayside. However, with all the extra eating and drinking, you can start to feel lethargic. Exercise will shake off the cobwebs and make you feel more energetic. It doesn't have to be strenuous. A walk or a swim is sufficient. There is no better way to avoid the afternoon slump on Christmas day than going for a walk after the Christmas dinner. The average Christmas dinner has about 1000 calories, so a walk after dinner is a good way to start working it off.

Get fresh air.

The more active you are outside, the more energy you will have. Getting fresh air will increase oxygen levels in the brain and energise your body.

Get enough sleep

To stay healthy at Christmas, make sure you're getting the amount of sleep you need. There will be many late nights as you catch up with friends and family. However, if you have some late nights, try having an early night in between to help your body recover. Aim to get 7 to 8 hours sleep a night. More information can be obtained on sleep and insomnia in Whelehans pharmacy or on our website.

Nutrition

It can be difficult to make healthy choices at Christmas. It's easy to get carried away with all the puddings, biscuits, chocolates and party food, but there are ways of eating healthy at Christmas and not forfeiting your enjoyment of food. On Christmas day, we can take in up to 6000 calories, which is over 3 times more than an average person needs in a day

Water

Drink plenty of water to keep you hydrated. The average adult should drink about 2.5 litres of water per day. You can count tea, coffee, fruit juices and other non-alcoholic fluids as part of your intake. But it is important to remember that tea and coffee have a diuretic effect, meaning they make us go to the toilet more and too much can dehydrate you. Try to minimise tea and coffee to a few cups a day.

Alcohol

If you do drink alcohol, try to alternate every alcoholic drink with a glass of water. Do not drink on an empty stomach. Eating before you drink will slow down the rate of alcohol absorption. If you do drink spirits or wine, sticking to clear spirits and white wine will cause less of a hangover the next day as they have less colouring. After a night out, drink plenty of water before going to bed as this helps prevent a hangover. Some people find Lifeline[®] can help prevent hang-overs, Lifeline[®] is available in Whelehans. However, moderation is the key. If you drink too much, you will feel hung-over the next day no matter what you do to try to prevent it. If you are going to

a party, have a healthy snack before you go as it will prevent you from snacking on unhealthy party food.

For comprehensive and free health advice and information call in to Whelehans, log on to www.whelehans.ie or dial 04493 34591. You can find us on Facebook. You can also e-mail queries to info@whelehans.ie.