

Wellness Tip: Don't Forget to Stay Active throughout the Holidays

By Lisa White, Wellness Committee Member

I know how it is. The kids are home on holiday break and you have time off of work. Family gatherings and holiday parties fill your schedules. Any time that is not jam-packed with shopping or cooking or social outings is spent seeking some well-deserved relaxation on the couch. The holiday season undoubtedly can be stressful and taking the time for some R&R every day is beneficial. But in all the hustle and bustle, it is easy to forget that our bodies still need exercise.

Just because our minds are on vacation doesn't mean our bodies should be. This goes for us adults as well as for our kids. It is especially important during times when we have a break from our regular schedules to stay active because not only do we typically eat more during those times but we also don't necessarily have a reason to move as much and find ourselves becoming sedentary.

There are several reasons why it is important to remember to include physical activity as part of our holiday breaks:

1. Exercise burns calories, helping to prevent weight gain.
2. Exercise is a mood booster, which in turn helps us more effectively deal with stress.
3. Exercise is also an energy booster, which is why the more active you are, the more likely you are to stay active.
4. Exercise keeps our bodies running more efficiently and enhances our physical fitness.
5. Exercise promotes better sleep. Want your kids to go to bed more easily? Get them running!
6. Exercise teaches kids that staying active is important and gives them an outlet for pent-up energy.
7. Exercise is a great way to bring family and friends together to create fun-filled memories.

Understandably, this time of year doesn't always lend much time for exercise. But it isn't hard to incorporate exercise into holiday festivities. Suggest a game of tag football or a walk around the block with family members after Thanksgiving dinner. Take a walk around the neighborhood to see lights, or if you are visiting a snowy area, go out sledding. Say yes when the kids ask you to play tag with them. Start a tradition to go ice skating every Christmas Eve or New Year's Eve. Help teach the kids how to be responsible by taking the family dog on regular walks. Invite friends over to play Wii or Xbox games that involve movement such as Wii sports, Zumba, or Just Dance.

There are an unlimited number of things that can help you and your family stay active through the holidays. Sit down together and make a list of activities all of you would enjoy, and make a pact that you will try to do as many as you can throughout the season. There is no need for perfection, just action. Every little bit of exercise will benefit you and your kids in a positive way. Try it for yourself and discover how great you feel!