

Words on Wellness

December 2011

Maintain Good Habits Throughout the Holiday Season



Along with holiday gifts and good cheer, the winter season often brings an uninvited guest to the party—weight gain. The average person gains 1 pound between October and January.

“It doesn’t sound like much weight, but the problem is that most people don’t lose that pound,” says Julie Stacey, Lee Health Solutions weight management coordinator. “In 20 years they could gain 20 pounds.”

Co-workers bring more food to share during the holiday months and friends often give edible gifts to show their appreciation, Julie says.

“If people are going to bring food for parties or other events, we encourage them to bring healthy dishes,” Julie says. “People won’t always choose to eat the healthier foods, but by having it at the party, at least they have an option.”

Being physically active during the holidays can help keep weight gain at bay. “I tell people they have to go into it with a plan,” Julie says. “I recommend being physically active for 30 minutes, at least three days a week. If you miss a day, make it up on another day.”

For people who want to start an exercise routine, now is a good time to take the initiative. “Don’t wait until the new year to start getting in shape,” Julie says. “That’s the worst decision, because people feel that it gives them a license

to eat everything they want and say, ‘I’ll wait until January.’ Doing it now helps establish a good routine.”

Julie suggests finding a friend, co-worker or family member who will commit to the same healthy habits. This will help you avoid excuses for skipping exercise in favor of less healthy habits. “It’s easy to get off track and say you have too much to do,” she says. “Being accountable helps you maintain the good habits you have already established.”

Healthy Holiday Tips:

Portion control - Do not overeat, especially high-fat foods and sweets.

Exercise - If busy with holiday activities, walk for 15 minutes, twice a day. Park your car as far from the building as possible to get in a few more steps.

Stay on track - Maintain normal routines, and if you cannot make it to the gym, exercise at home.

Sleep - Getting enough sleep leads to better decisions and more energy.



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Ask The Doc

Salvatore Lacagnina, D.O., is the Lee Memorial Health System vice president of health & wellness. He is board certified in internal medicine and has been in practice since 1993. As a regular part of Words on Wellness, Dr. Lacagnina is answering your health-related questions each month. Send your questions to AskTheDoc@LeeMemorial.org.

Question

How can I beat depression and stress during the holidays?

Answer

These days, stress seems to be a constant part of life for many people. When stress becomes a chronic problem, health degenerates and depression can occur. Stress and depression are two of the most common reasons why people visit their physicians.

Fortunately, both are treatable once you are able to determine the causes for stress and/or depression. To do this, it is important for your physician to take a good history from you as this may identify the cause for the stress and the depression.

There are many good treatment options for stress and depression. Counseling is helpful, as are medications, but one problem with taking medications is the potential for side effects. Some of the medications used for stress calm you down but can make you feel too sedated. The medications used to treat depression can interact with other medications,

so it is important you tell your physician all the prescriptions and over-the-counter medications you take.

This is not a traditional treatment recommendation, but I believe another helpful treatment is to “get rich by counting your blessings.” When you do this, you realize how wealthy you really are and this helps to minimize the stress and depression. We can always find another who has a life more difficult than ours. When we do this, we realize how fortunate we really are and this seems to put things into perspective.

So, you first need to identify the cause of the stress and/or depression. Next, talk with your physician about counseling and/or medications. Then “count your blessings”—this above all will be the best treatment combination. Lastly, don’t forget about the value of eating a healthy diet and exercising daily, as both of these are known to help decrease the effects of stress and depression and also benefit all other areas of health and life.

Stay well! 

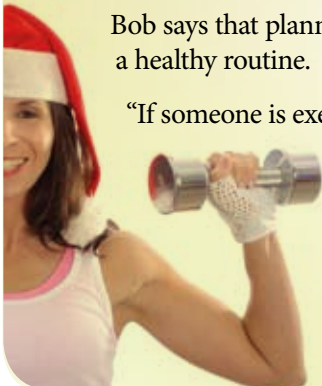
Routines Help Combat Holiday Hype

Finding the holiday spirit can mean losing track of the important parts of the season. Parties, shopping and visiting relatives often are welcome diversions, but can lead down the wrong path.

“Sometimes people think it will be OK to miss ‘this one week’ of exercise for whatever reason, and then the week turns into two or three or more,” says exercise specialist Bob Wilder.

Bob says that planning ahead helps his clients maintain a healthy routine.

“If someone is exercising regularly, he or she generally feels better on exercise days,” Bob says. “If they start missing during the holidays, there is the normal stress of the holidays compounded with the stress of not working out.”



Avoiding workouts can lead to other unhealthy choices, such as overspending on holiday gifts, depression and overindulging in alcohol.

Paula Kaminski is a financial advisor, as well as a member of Lee Center for Rehabilitation & Wellness.

“I try not to make too many additional commitments during this time of year,” Paula says. “If I am going to a party, I try not to go hungry. I’ve been to too many parties where the veggie tray was the only healthy option.”

By sticking to her schedule, Paula says she is able to get through the last two months of the year without gaining weight or taxing her budget with too many purchases.

“You really have to stay in control,” she says. “We all have to be responsible for every decision that we make. If you charge something on a credit card in December, that bill is coming in January. Time is a better present than any gift you can give.”

Morning Workouts Jump-start Her Day

Group exercise instructor Mary Parker is a morning person. Every weekday, she teaches a 6 a.m. class. Her routine: Mondays and Fridays - Cycling; Tuesdays and Thursdays - Body Pump/Core; Wednesdays - Yoga. After leading the exercise classes, Mary heads to work at Caloosa Middle School.


"I love mornings," Mary says. "Kudos to those who manage to get to the gym after a day's work—that would be a challenge for me. Morning workouts get me revved up and ready to go."

Mary has spent her mornings at the Wellness Center of Cape Coral since 2003. She began her tenure as the front desk receptionist, working the 5-10 a.m. shift. Throughout the next year, she helped wherever she was needed—deli, membership and laundry. Meanwhile, she also started attending certification workshops and began instructing group exercise in 2004.

In October 2005, Mary accepted a teaching position at Caloosa Middle School. She didn't want to give up her group exercise, so she slid into the available 6 a.m. teaching routine. "I am so blessed to be able to do both jobs, and with such convenience," Mary says. "I love all of the group exercise classes, but it is the members who make it so great. They challenge and inspire me to give my best."

Mary says that her morning classes have a couple of catchphrases—"The hardest part is coming through the door" and, "Why do we do it? Because we can."

Getting up early and exercising before the workday may not be for everyone, but Mary encourages you to try different things to find what works because it is much easier to stick with something you like to do. If you are a morning person, Mary's weekly classes are all you need to get a complete workout.



"I love all of the group exercise classes, but it is the members who make it so great," says Mary.

Give the Gift of Health

This holiday season, choose the gift that keeps on giving all year long—a gift certificate to one of our Wellness Centers. You also can give your loved ones the gift of massage or personal training sessions. To purchase a gift certificate for the Wellness Center or any additional services, stop by the front desk at either location.

Walking Toward Healthier Hearts

Heart disease and stroke are the nation's No. 1 and No. 3 killers, claiming more than 865,000 American lives every year. Help raise funds to save lives while getting healthier at the same time.

The 2011 Lee County Start! Heart Walk will be held Saturday, Dec. 10 at Centennial Park in downtown Fort Myers. Registration for the 5K is free, and walkers who raise at least \$100 will receive a Start! Heart Walk T-shirt.

The Wellness Centers will be training walkers at both locations, joining forces on the day of the walk as one team called the "Wellness Warriors." To join or make a donation, call one of the team captains listed below or go to www.LeeHeartWalk.org.

Wellness Center of Cape Coral
Co-captain: **Debbi Jarvis, 573-4517**

Lee Center for Rehabilitation & Wellness
Co-captain: **Mary K. Wallace, 418-2000**



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Please call the Wellness Centers to inquire about our seasonal membership opportunities.

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Happening This Month

The Wellness Center of Cape Coral

To register, call 573-4800 unless otherwise noted.

Keeping Your Heart Healthy During the Holidays

Presented by Jeannel Huffman, FGCU intern. 5 p.m., Dec. 6 or 11 a.m., Dec. 7

Oh! My Aching Back

The Wellness Spine Class includes specific education on your posture, keeping your spine safe and which exercises are essential to accomplish your daily activities, presented by Kurt Gray, physical therapist. 6 p.m., Dec. 13

Preparing for the Holidays: Stop the Gluttony

Presented by Dr. Salvatore Lacagnina. 4 p.m., Dec. 21

Lee Center for Rehabilitation & Wellness

To register, call 418-2000 unless otherwise noted.

Preparing for the Holidays: Stop the Gluttony

Presented by Dr. Salvatore Lacagnina. 11 a.m., Dec. 13

Oh! My Aching Back

The Wellness Spine Class includes specific education on your posture, keeping your spine safe and which exercises are essential to accomplish your daily activities, presented by Kurt Gray, physical therapist. 6 p.m., Dec. 8

