

2023 November 16 - Healthy Habits

SUMMARY

The VIDA Office Hours session, hosted by Dr. Carolyn George and Brandon Ward, focused on maintaining health and fitness goals during the holiday season. Key strategies discussed included:

1. **Moderation in Indulgences:** The emphasis was on enjoying holiday treats and alcohol in moderation. Practical tips included filling half the plate with vegetables, opting for whole grains, and choosing lean proteins. The discussion highlighted the calorie content of alcohol, suggesting moderation and hydrating with water between drinks.
2. **Stress Management:** Identifying and managing holiday stressors was a significant topic. Recommendations included setting realistic expectations, delegating tasks, and ensuring that one did not overextend oneself with holiday preparations.
3. **Healthy Cooking Tips:** Suggestions for healthier holiday meals included using low-fat Greek yogurt in mashed potatoes, opting for whole wheat bread in stuffing, and sweetening cranberry sauce with natural sweeteners like honey or maple syrup. The use of healthy fats like avocado oil and the incorporation of herbs and spices for flavor enhancement were also recommended.
4. **Exercise and Physical Activity:** Emphasizing the importance of staying active, advice was given to aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate to intense exercise most days. Breaking exercise into smaller sessions and incorporating activities like walking and light exercises during the day were encouraged.
5. **Community and Sharing:** The session highlighted the importance of community and sharing during the holidays. It suggested asking guests to bring dishes, sharing leftovers with those in need, and involving everyone in cleanup to make the occasion more enjoyable and less burdensome for the host.
6. **Gratitude and Mindfulness:** Encouraging a practice of gratitude, participants were advised to share things they are thankful for during holiday meals. This practice was noted to not only create a sense of community but also to enhance digestion and overall well-being.

In conclusion, the session provided practical and health-focused tips to enjoy the holiday season responsibly, emphasizing the importance of moderation, stress management, community involvement, and gratitude.

Disclaimer: Raw Transcription

Please note that this document is a raw transcription of Dr. G's office hour video. We have made every effort to capture the essence and content of the session accurately. However, due to the nature of live spoken dialogue, the transcript may contain minor errors or discrepancies from the original audio. This transcript is intended to be a supplementary resource and may not reflect a verbatim record of the discussion.

UNEDITED RAW TRANSCRIPT

00:00:02.085 --> 00:02:59.105 Hello, and welcome back to the VIDA Office Hours. , I'm Dr. Carolyn George, joined by the awesome Brandon Ward. And. Hi everybody. Tonight we're gonna be talking about what's your topic tonight. Brandon, the topic tonight is about how to stay healthy during the holiday season. Um, right now we got Thanksgiving coming up, and then Christmas, Hanukkah, and New Year's and all of the above. So it's about some healthy habits, how to make sure you don't, derail your health and fitness goals during this holiday season. Yeah, and that's key because this is a really tough time of year for a lot of people. I really kind of hate ordering labs for people to be done in January after two months of a variety of excesses.

And, um, so if we can help people to figure out just little ways to tweak what they're doing so that it doesn't kind of all get lost, all the hard work they've done for the last 10 months, just get thrown away in two months of, of all these, um, fun activities and celebrations, then I think we're ahead of the game. Exactly. That's the goal is to make sure people stay on track and can keep making gains and wins throughout the holiday season. Yep. You got it.

So just as a reminder for everybody on the left, we see the attendee chat and there's a place there where you can put in questions and I'll be monitoring that because when, um, Brandon is giving his talk, he can't see that. So I will, I can't even like put my hand up, I just have to interrupt him and say, you know, Hey, we've got a question. Um, and that way we kind of keep it interactive. We love all your questions, so feel free to send them in. And, we of course will have a Q and A at the end if there's anything that didn't get covered. But, um, please, let's make this, um, an interactive event. Awesome. All right, You got it? Yes. So share my screen. Go ahead and share your screen. And what we're gonna do is take out our pictures so that you can see this bigger. Yes. All right, Here we go. Here we go. Okay, so let's get started. Try to stay healthy for the holidays.

So the holidays are a wonderful time of year, but they can also be stressful and unhealthy for some, um, there are parties, food, drinks. With all of these things going on, it can be fairly difficult to stay on track with your health goals. Um, however, with a few simple tips and tricks and some minor tweaks here and there, you can enjoy the holidays without sacrificing your health. So that's the goal of this talk, is to try to teach you how to make some minor adjustments that will allow you to still enjoy time with family and friends, but also enjoy, um, the benefits of staying healthy.

00:03:01.685 --> 00:03:47.025 Number one tip to stay healthy. Make sure you get sleep. Sleep is the one thing that we can control that we often overlook. Um, and it is very, very important to keep our immune system strong, especially throughout this time when we're meeting with family and friends and big groups and things like that. So when you're well rested, you're able to resist cravings and make healthy choices. Um, the goal is to aim for seven to nine hours of sleep each night. That's something you should be doing on a regular basis, but especially during the holiday season when you're either traveling or you're staying out late or meeting up with friends and family, make sure to try to prioritize some sleep. Um, couple of tips that if you're having some trouble

sleeping, um, try to establish or maintain a regular sleep schedule. So this is another trick.

00:03:47.405 --> 00:05:37.885 or tip that we give to patients, um, trying to manage their health on a regular basis, but let's try not to let that get off track during the holiday season. So keeping a sleep schedule, sticking to it as much as possible, avoiding caffeine, alcohol, and screens before bedtime is very, very ideal, um, into creating a relaxing bedtime routine. Um, making sure your bedroom is dark, quiet and cool, um, is important. Darkness helps to promote the production of melatonin, a hormone that regulates sleep, noise and light can also disrupt sleep. So making sure your bedroom is dark and quiet as possible is a key. Um, a cool temperature also helps us, make sure our environment is ideal and make sure that we kind of stay asleep through the night and don't toss and turn or wake up. Another thing is let's identify stressors. Oh, I'm sorry, go ahead. Oh, I was just gonna say another thing I like to point out for the holiday, you mentioned not having alcohol close to bedtime, and so, that's something, you know, with all the parties that are going on the dinners, et cetera, it's fine if you have a drink or two at dinner time, maybe early evening, but try to stop drinking at least a couple of hours before you're going to bed two to three hours before you're going to go to sleep is ideal. So it's had a chance to be broken down and it doesn't affect your sleep as much. It still can for some people, but it's a lot better than, you know, finishing a drink and then going to brush your teeth and then going to bed. Yes, most definitely. We'll talk about alcohol and some tips to, to navigate that a little bit later, but I mean, the more you can distance, um, the time before bed and your last drink, the better your sleep is going to be for sure. Um, and it also, you know, limit the amount of fat that you store, , for all the food that You eat. Yes. Right. Um,

00:05:39.165 --> 00:07:36.485 Yes. So another thing is identify stressors. what are some of the things that tend to stress you out during the holidays? Um, is it preparing food for everybody? Is it making sure that all the events are perfect, is it, you know, getting your kids and family and friends together and making sure that, um, everyone has what they need? The goal is to identify these things that may stress you out during the holidays. And once you know what your stressors are, you can start to develop strategies for coping with them. So the goal is to set realistic expectations and try not to do too much during the holidays. It's okay to say no to commitments or to delegate tasks to others. Taking breaks and scheduling time for yourself to relax and de-stress is very important. Um, the most important thing is to try to make sure that you don't overwhelm yourself. So things that help de-stress can involve reading, taking a walk, um, with family or loved ones and just laugh. You know, we, we undervalue how much, , importance there is on being happy and sharing time with loved ones. So really take this time during the holidays to laugh and enjoy being around the people that are closest to you that you might not see as often as you would like. Um, A hundred percent. Yeah, that's huge. Huge, huge. Right? And, sometimes we can think of family as being a strain because there's often dysfunctional relationships, but trying to just hone in on the positive, you know, if it's somebody you just see once a year, try to make a joke out of, you know, behavior that might otherwise bother you, you try to use humor wherever you

can to lighten, the stress of the situation, things light, but also, yes, exactly right. Practicing relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, and maybe even trying to sneak away for a little bit of yoga can help reduce and manage that stress and even improve sleep quality. So the goal is don't overextend yourself. Be social, but make sure taking care of yourself is the priority.

00:07:42.555 --> 00:09:36.475 Next is important to make sure you continue to eat your healthy diet during the holidays. There are many tempting treats around, but the goal is to make sure you enjoy those things in moderation. So a couple of key points. Make sure you fill your plate with vegetables. Majority of your plate should be vegetable, or at least half of your plate should be vegetables. Um, make sure you're enjoying fruits and whole grains at every meal and trying to limit those processed foods and sugary drinks and unhealthy fats. Don't be afraid to indulge occasionally, but do so in moderation. Um, getting back to that alcohol piece, alcohol is a part of partying and being with family and friends and dinners and all of those kinds of things, but making sure to enjoy alcohol in moderation is going to be the important part. Um, oftentimes we tend to overindulge and not take stock of how much alcohol we're drinking. Just remember that one gram of alcohol is about, I'm sorry. Yeah, one, I'm sorry. Seven ounces of alcohol is about seven calories, which is more than one gram of carbohydrates and proteins just a little bit less than fat. And alcohol doesn't benefit from the thermic effect of food, which is the energy that we use to digest and absorb our food. Um, so what tends to happen is we tend to drink more alcohol and bring in more calories than we actually need, and aren't burning those calories at the same time. Um, our body perceives alcohol as a toxin, even though it's a little fun to have. Um, and therefore it metabolizes that alcohol first, meaning all of the yummy food that you're eating has to wait in line, oftentimes being shuttled to storage mode and turning into fat. Um, so our goal is to make sure we either limit or drink alcohol in moderation. Couple key tips to do that is to make sure you hydrate right. One way of thinking about that is to maybe have one alcoholic beverage and one glass of water.

00:09:37.015 --> 00:11:45.045 Um, another way to do that is to avoid the high-calorie mixed drinks such as the margaritas, the mudslides, and all those other things. But if you actually really do enjoy them, consider having it as a dessert, having one as a dessert. Um, another option is to limit yourself to a certain number of drinks per party, which will help you drink maybe half as much as you typically would. And then lastly, sip slowly, take time and enjoy your alcoholic beverage. Um, this is a time of fun and what we call, you know, getting to know one another and hanging out and making sure to prioritize the conversation and time with friends as opposed to the beverages that you're engaging in. Yeah. And that's, all great tips. I like the, the glass of water between each alcoholic drink 'cause that keeps you hydrated and, um, slows you down with, um, the drinking. That's a good one. What's your favorite one, Brandon? Yeah, that's, that's actually my favorite one. Another one I would say is, is keep your alcohol budget, um, at or below 200 calories. So if you know each drink, so for instance, a glass of red wine about five ounces, um, is gonna give you around, you know, seven grams of carbohydrates or rather seven calories of alcohol, or a beer is about 12 ounces, again, is gonna give you around a hundred calories. Um, so maybe you start to moderate, and I don't expect very many people to remember how many calories are in each beverage,

but think about, um, trying to limit your alcohol content. So say, Hey, I'm gonna go to this party. I'm gonna fellowship with friends and family, but I'm gonna make sure to only have two, one or three beverages and that'll be my limit. And prioritize spending time talking to people and enjoying people as opposed to indulging in the beverages would be my one tip. Yeah. And just a question. You said the beer was about a hundred calories Or 12 ounces Or 12 ounces and a glass of red wine or any wine? Like, , six or eight-ounce glasses. It was somewhere between five and six ounces, about 120, a hundred to 125 calories.

00:11:45.355 --> 00:13:46.665 Okay. So that's, everybody think about that. And a Snickers bar is about what? 200 calories? Mm-Hmm Mm-Hmm. Somewhere in there. So it's like half of a snicker bar. If you have two drinks, two ounces of, hard liquor or two glasses of wine, you're eating a snicker bar. Exactly. And, when you put it into that context, people tend to understand that yes, it's an alcoholic beverage. Yes, we're enjoying ourselves, but we are adding to that calorie, intake every single time. Yep. Every single time. So anybody wanting to stay fit or to lose weight, make sure to limit that alcohol. 'cause it is, it is counterproductive, counterintuitive to your goal. Yep. It's sugar. It's just, I mean, I love a glass of wine, but I consider it's like you say my dessert. And so I'm not gonna have the dessert if I'm gonna have a glass of wine or an alcoholic beverage. Exactly. And that, that's one way to make sure that we don't overextend ourselves or overindulge too much. Yeah. So another, another tip here is to prioritize some exercise. So exercise is a great way to burn off those extra calories from all the alcohol and, goodies that we're ingesting. Um, so I try to, to tell clients and patients to aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate to intense exercise most days of the week. And it doesn't have to be anything crazy. You don't have to. During the holidays, we tend to get, get overwhelmed and stress with a lot of the priorities or the, um, obligations that we have. So one tip I like to tell people is try not to think about taking those 30 minutes all in one big chunk. You can take shorter, smaller breaks and break your workouts into small sessions, um, to, or even just your energy, exercise into small sessions. 'cause that will help you make sure that you're getting movement throughout the course of the day. one, one quick thing is maybe take a brisk walk at lunchtime or after dinner and have a talk with family and friends, or maybe do some squats or jumping jacks while you're waiting for the oven to preheat while you're cooking.

00:13:47.125 --> 00:15:50.055 Um, the goal is to make sure you're taking small bites out of the apple and just moving throughout the day and trying not to spend too much time being sedentary. Exercise is also a great way to help improve sleep and manage stress. Next, let's talk about what we eat. What are we eating during the holidays? So I know there are a lot of yummy good foods out there. Everyone has their special recipes, their favorite dishes. Um, but a couple of tips to make those dishes a little bit healthier or to make sure that we're not overindulging is making sure we're choosing good quality proteins. Right? Having lean meats, um, of red meat or poultry or fish are gonna be ideal if you're cooking Turkey. Sometimes I like to tell people to remove the skin 'cause that reduces the fat and calories in the Turkey that you're ingesting. Um, making sure to add herbs and spices to get those good phytonutrients into your diet and enhance the

flavor of that protein without adding fat or too much sodium. Make sure you're using healthy cooking methods such as roasting or baking, um, which are much better than frying. Um, when roasting vegetables, make sure to use a small amount of avocado oil to coat them. Um, same thing. You can add herbs and spices to those vegetables. We wanna make sure we opt for whole grains instead of refined grains and simple carbohydrates. Um, whole grains are a good source of fiber, which helps us feel satiated longer or sooner which will reduce the amount of food that we're eating. Excuse me, limit saturated fats in healthy fats. And let's try to make sure to avoid any added sugar as best as possible in terms of typical dishes that you usually see on the side, maybe swap out some of the creamy dips for hummus, um, or things like that. You can make a fruit salad and for dessert instead of the sugary pies.

00:15:50.675 --> 00:17:57.105 Um, for mashed potatoes, instead of using milk and butter, try to opt for low-fat Greek yogurt or vegetable broth. Um, that can add a little bit of flavor to it. Um, for your stuffing dishes, maybe use whole wheat bread and vegetables instead of white bread and processed meats, um, for your cranberry sauce. Instead of using sugar, sweeten your cranberry sauce with honey or maple syrup or even monk fruit, um, can help add a little flavor to that. Um, you can also use different fruits instead of cranberries, such as apples or oranges to add a little bit of flavor. Um, another quick tip for green bean casserole, you can use low fat cream of mushroom soup and reduce fat cheese to help add some flavor. You can also add some roasted vegetables such as broccoli or carrots for extra nutrients. And then cookies, everyone loves their cookies and their sweets, so if you feel the need to bake some cookies, um, try to opt for a whole wheat flour, um, and add less sugar. Those are some of my tips. Um, and next, anybody have any questions or Dr. George, do you wanna have any quick discussion about some of the things that, that we went over? Yeah, I think that was a lot of good ideas there in terms of ways to sub out things that are helpful, just watch the low fat things because sometimes they add in more sugar to take out the fat, so sometimes it's a good quality fat, just keep it in and just watch the, the sugar and the salt content. I love those ideas, especially the grilling or broiling vegetables. A lot of that can be done before and that makes your, it frees up your oven to do other things. Um, yes, I think there's lots, lots of little tricks that you can do to try to make the whole Thanksgiving and Christmas or Hanukkah meals a little bit less stressful if you plan in advance and you've got some things done before, um, before the event so that you can spend more time enjoying your guests.

00:17:58.065 --> 00:19:47.045 Yes, that's actually one tip that I forgot to put on here is, is over the time planning ahead, right, making sure that everything's not last minute, that you're not cooking right before dinner, that you're, you know, not trying to preheat food before everyone comes over. Setting the table is looking at the calendar ahead and trying to take small bites of the apple. I mean, I've told patients and clients that maybe they should start this week preparing some of the meals, some of the things that will keep a little bit better in the fridge or the freezer, um, so that they can just preheat before the Thanksgiving dinner. And that way, like you said, have more time to spend with their family and friends, um, at the meal as opposed to preparing that day of. I think that's really key because I find if I am feeding a whole bunch of people, then I'm working the whole time and I don't really enjoy it. And it's just stressful. It's a lot of work

beforehand. It's a lot of not enjoying at the time and then a lot of work cleaning up afterwards. And so I exactly usually try to have people bring in a dish so that I'm not cooking them all, and that way they can get something that's special to them, if they've got any food sensitivities, I'll always ask people that I'm inviting to my home if they have any allergies or food sensitivities or anything that they're avoiding so I can accommodate that. Not everybody does that and sometimes that's a stress generator because you don't want to tell somebody, don't make that with gluten or don't make that with dairy. Um, so if you just bring something yourself, you at least know you're gonna have something that you can eat. And it helps them feel involved one way of, you know, feeling community or fellowship is sharing food, right? Mm-Hmm. I mean, there's a lot of emotion around food and if you can bring a dish to someone's house and you can see the joy that your family and friends get from eating your food and how tasty it is, that's one way to spice up or make your holidays even more meaningful as well.

00:19:47.225 --> 00:21:44.155 So, Mm-Hmm. Sometimes off, you know, delegating those tasks and sharing the load with other people, having them bring their favorite dishes can make them feel more a part of the holiday season as well. Yep. Yeah, it can be a win-win for everybody and then less work on the end cleaning things up. And then you can, you know, have I usually like to try to have something that little containers I can put leftovers in so I'm not left with a fridge full of food that I'm gonna try to eat all in two days before it goes bad. Yeah. Away stuff home. Right. Share the load. Yeah. So that you're not tempted to spend the next three weeks, two months eating all of the food that, that you've cooked. Remember, the holidays are a day, right? Thanksgiving is a day, Christmas is a day. Hanukkah, it's eight days. But the goal is to make sure that we're not extending that out over the course of the entire season. So enjoy for that Thanksgiving meal. Enjoy for that Christmas meal, enjoy for that big dinner with family and friends, but try not to make sure you're overindulging the next day for lunch and the day after that for the piece of pie or whatever the case is. Limited to that, that one meal, um, would be ideal. And if you do take leftovers home and have other things, just make sure you practice moderation. Yep. Absolutely. And one thing that, I didn't do this since Covid, but before Covid, I would bring leftovers out to the beach to a lot of the homeless people. 'cause a lot of them Yeah. They just don't get anything like this. So you can put it on plates and you can see them there. You can leave it out on picnic benches if you don't wanna talk to them. Um, but there are ways to share your bounty with others. Yes, for sure. It's, it's good to pay it forward for people who are less fortunate for sure. Yep. And, , one of the last things I'll say that I think is a really nice tradition, and you can do this at any meal, but it is particularly meaningful at Thanksgiving, is to ask everybody around your table to say one or two or more things that they're thankful for.

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