

Moving to the holiday beat

Holly Kouvo, Eons contributor



If you're like most Americans, when you step onto a scale on January 1, 2007, you might discover that you acquired an unwanted "gift" during the 2006 holiday season: eleven extra pounds. Most of us spend the period between Thanksgiving and New Year's overeating at holiday parties featuring calorie-laden appetizer and dessert buffets -- and forgetting to exercise.

You can avoid this "gift" by being conscious of what you eat and keeping up with your exercise routines - or starting that new one you were planning to put on your New Year's resolution list.

Keep your exercise program on track

Here are some strategies that can help you keep your exercise routine on course during the holidays.

- ❖ **Have a plan.** Decide now what kind of exercise you will do and when. If the winter weather in your area might force an interruption to your habitual outdoor activities, find a way to work out indoors. Swim laps at the local Y. Or try weight training, yoga, tennis, spinning, kickboxing, Pilates, or Tai Chi. Sign up for a class if you're new to these activities.
- ❖ **Get up earlier.** As you get into the holiday season, if the days seem to be filled with more and more activities, then maybe you need to get up a half hour earlier to fit in your exercise routine. Rising even 15 minutes earlier will allow you to do some energy-boosting cardiovascular exercise that will get you motivated for the day.
- ❖ **Walk indoors.** If the day is too gloomy, wet, or cold to walk outdoors, find an indoor venue for a brisk stroll. Take advantage of waiting time and "before and after" times for other activities to sneak in short walks. Recent studies have shown that exercising for several short periods

throughout the day can be as beneficial as exercising continuously for a roughly equivalent amount of time.

- ❖ **Walk while waiting at the airport.** Airlines recommend arriving at the airport at least an hour before domestic flights. Use that time to walk around the terminal or up and down the steps between floors.
- ❖ **Walk during car trips.** If you are traveling by car, stop every few hours and walk briskly for five minutes. You will feel energized and increase blood circulation in your legs.
- ❖ **Walk the mall.** When you go to shop for holiday gifts, park farther away from the mall entrance than you normally would. Also, park at the end of the mall opposite from the stores you plan to visit. Walk the length of the mall to get where you want to go and then back again. If you're loaded down with shopping bags, be sure to carry them in a way that does not strain your back or shoulders.

Plan lively activities with your grandchildren. Here are some suggestions for great bonding activities that will also energize you and burn up calories.

Outdoor activities

- ❖ Pile up leaves and take turns jumping into the pile.
- ❖ Pull your grandchild down the sidewalk on a sled.
- ❖ Go snow shoeing. If you don't own snow shoes, rent them at a cross country ski center.
- ❖ Build a snowman.
- ❖ Go for a hike.
- ❖ Walk (don't drive) around the neighborhood to look at the holiday lights.

Indoor activities

- ❖ Dance together. Put on your favorite rock and roll or disco music and show your grandchildren how to dance like they did on American Bandstand or in Saturday Night Fever.
- ❖ Play the floor game Twister.
- ❖ Play Charades (use cartoons or TV shows for material)
- ❖ Have a "race" between you on a treadmill and your grandchild on a rocking horse. This activity may not last long; many children have an attention span of around ten minutes.



Spice up your exercise program with something new. If you usually do some form of cardiovascular exercise (treadmill, stationary bike, elliptical), consider adding a new "interval" activity to keep your interest from flagging during the holidays. Adding resistance training with dumbbells or a resistance band to your routine will help you stretch and strengthen your muscles and improve your posture.

Here is a sample 30-minute program, using dumbbells, unopened 15-oz. soup cans, or a resistance band for the interval exercises. CAUTION: Do not try the interval exercises on your own unless you have had previous weight training instruction. You risk injuring yourself if you do them incorrectly.

- ❖ Walk ten minutes on the treadmill.
- ❖ Interval: One minute doing one set (12 reps) of bicep curls.
- ❖ Walk on the treadmill for five minutes.
- ❖ Interval: One minute doing one set of overhead shoulder presses.
- ❖ Walk on the treadmill for five minutes.
- ❖ Interval: One minute doing one set of tricep kickbacks.
- ❖ Walk on the treadmill for three minutes.
- ❖ Interval: One minute doing one set of double arm rows.
- ❖ Walk on the treadmill for three minutes.

With a little planning and creativity, you can keep your exercise program on track during the riskiest time of year for derailing. Of course, overeating can sabotage your efforts, so you will need a strategy for dealing with holiday food temptations. Stay tuned to Eons for good advice.

Holly Kouvo

Eons contributor

Holly Kouvo is an Aerobics and Fitness Association of America-certified personal trainer and aerobics instructor as well as a certified nutrition specialist. As president of Fitting Fitness In, she focuses on helping people who need to lose 100 pounds or more. She recently produced a video entitled "Total Body Workout...Just Easy on the Knees." This is the first in her Easy On™ series, designed to bring knee-friendly exercises into people's homes. Contact her at 978-502-8781 or holly@fittingfitnessin.com.