

Eat Smart, Move More...  
Maintain, don't gain!

# HOLIDAY Challenge

WEEK 5

## Holiday Challenge Guidelines

The overall goal is for participants to *maintain* their current weight for the last 7 weeks of the year. As a participant, you will:

- Weigh yourself each week.
- Track what you eat and drink.
- Track your activity.
- Make a plan.

Only 3 weeks left!

The time between Thanksgiving and Christmas can be some of the more challenging as the days are shorter and our lives get busier. This is your reminder that today is the start of a new week and you've got this!

## WEEK #5 CHALLENGE:

### Focus on Whole Grains

This week challenge yourself to increase your daily fiber intake by adding more whole grains to your diet. Make at least half of the grains in your diet whole grains and try one new whole grain.

Almost 40% of the refined grains Americans consume are from yeast bread like hamburger buns and pizza crust. High consumption of refined grains is associated with increased body fat while consumption of whole grains is associated with decreased abdominal fat. Refined grains are missing one or more parts of the grain and lack some of the nutrients that are found in their whole grain counterparts. Choosing whole grains is a simple healthy change that you can make to your regular meals and snacks.

Put your nutrition facts label reading skills to use — when purchasing whole grains, read labels and look for products that include the word **WHOLE** listed with the first ingredient. For example, if the ingredient list starts with any of the following: “enriched wheat flour,” “multi-grain,” “wheat,” or “contains whole grains,” the product is most likely not a whole grain.

Try these easy flips — replace white pasta with whole-grain pasta and white hamburger buns with whole wheat buns.



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## Daily Tip: Cooking Whole Grains

Eating whole grains regularly is healthier than consuming refined grains. This healthy eating strategy seems simple enough, but if you are unsure how to cook a variety of whole grains you are less likely to incorporate them into your cooking routine and ultimately your diet. There are two basic techniques when it comes to cooking whole grains—the boil and simmer method and the pasta method.

### **Boil and simmer method**

Cook most whole grains the same way you cook rice. Put the dry grain in a pan with water or broth, bring to a boil, and then simmer covered until the liquid is absorbed.

### **Pasta method**

Pasta is usually cooked in a large amount of boiling water, boiled until tender, and then the excess liquid is drained off. Some whole grains (including brown rice, farro, and wheat berries) can also be cooked in this way.

Grains can vary in cooking time depending on the age and type of the grain and the pan. When you decide they're tender and tasty, they're done. If "time is up," and the grain is not as tender as you like, simply add more liquid and continue cooking. Or, if the grain seems ready to eat before the liquid is all absorbed, simply drain the excess. If you find that whole grains stick to the bottom of the pan, turn off the heat, add a small amount of liquid, cover, and let sit for a few minutes. The grain will loosen, making serving and cleaning easier.

Check out this recipe for [\*\*Whole Wheat Pasta with Pesto and Vegetables!\*\*](#)

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## Daily Tip: Nutrition When Visiting Family

If you are visiting and staying with family this holiday season, it may be harder to keep up with your nutrition routine. How can you make good decisions, not perfect decisions, during these events? Everyone's family dynamic and accommodations are different, but we encourage you to think about ways to adapt your routine. Thinking of ideas and turning them into a game plan before your trip will increase your confidence and chance of sticking to your routine. Below are questions and tips to help you create an adjusted plan for nutrition success. All of these may not apply to you and that's okay! Take some of these ideas or parts of them to build your own plan.

- **Who are you staying with?** Whose kitchen would you access? Would it be okay if you brought a few items to keep in the fridge or pantry? Call ahead and ask that person some questions.
- **What meals are core family meals?** Meals that are not core family meals (or leftovers) could be opportunities for you to bring or make meals that align with your nutrition routine.
- **What meal suggestions do you have?** See if you could participate in the planning. The person responsible for cooking may appreciate your support. Talk through ideas for healthy, family-friendly meals and offer to assist with grocery shopping and cooking.
- **What healthy swaps could you make?** Replacing a family favorite is probably a no-go but think about healthy swaps for side dishes and other meals.
- **How can you involve the family?** Once you have a plan, invite other family members to help with cooking and meal preparation. This could be an enjoyable way to spend time together and make cooking a family event.

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### **Daily Challenge**

Make good decisions, not perfect ones.



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### Daily Tip: Junk Food Temptation

Even outside of the holidays, our shopping environments are barraged with junk food. Most of the food and beverage checkout offerings are candy, gum, chips, and soda. Added sugars are any sugar that is added during the processing of foods—they do not include naturally occurring sugars that are found in milk, fruits, and vegetables. Added sugars do not provide any nutritional value other than calories. Ideally, less than 6 percent of our calories should come from added sugars. For someone who eats typically 2,000 calories a day, staying under 6 percent leaves less than 120 calories or about 7 teaspoons of added sugar (1).

- **Don't let yourself get too hungry.** If you are hungry between meals try fresh fruit and a small piece of dark chocolate or carrots with hummus.
- **Don't drink your calories.** Our bodies don't recognize liquid calories the same as when we chew solid foods.
- **Find foods that don't cause an intense internal struggle.** This means identifying foods that you enjoy but won't cause you internal stress for eating them. Or stick to the **one bite** rule.
- **Address your stress.** Stopping ourselves from doing things we want is taxing and when we are stressed, we are less likely to be able to resist a craving.
- **Get enough sleep.** If you aren't getting the recommended amount of sleep, your appetite increases the next day, and you are less likely to feel full.
- **Give yourself a break.** Practice flexible thinking—make good decisions, not necessarily perfect decisions, and know each day is a fresh start.

1. What to know as companies cut added sugars. Center for Science in the Public Interest Web site. <https://www.cspinet.org/article/what-know-companies-cut-added-sugars>. Updated 2020. Accessed Sep 9, 2022.

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## Daily Tip: Have an Exercise Snack

When you hear snack, you usually think of food, but have you heard of an exercise snack? Exercise snacks are short sessions of physical activity that might be a convenient addition to your everyday routine. Movement of any kind can benefit our overall health. Mini exercise sessions or "exercise snacks" may help you reach your physical activity goals. Gift yourself with exercise snacks this holiday season!

Americans tend to be very sedentary, especially those who work at desks. When you remain seated for prolonged periods, your spine adapts to those positions and does not move as well. This increases your risk of injury when engaging in other activities (1). Our bodies and brains function better when we move regularly (2). Every 30 minutes to an hour, stand up and move for 2-4 minutes. Take a short walk around the office or building or stretch by your desk. Try exercise snacks for these reasons:

- **Boost energy** - Movement gets our blood flowing which promotes energy production within the body.
- **Promote brain power** - Taking a break from our work helps us refocus once we return.
- **Lower stress** - Short exercise sessions release feel-good hormones, or endorphins, which naturally lower stress levels.
- **Flexibility** - Busy schedule? Include exercise snacks throughout your day for times when a 30-minute workout isn't doable.

1. Pham V. *Sit up straight: Futureproof your body against chronic pain with 12 simple movements*. Scribner; 2022.

2. Wendy Suzuki: The brain-changing benefits of exercise | TED. Youtube.com Web site. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BHY0FxzoKZE>. Updated 2018. Accessed 8-20-, 2022.