

THE HEALING HANDS THAT GIVE

A STRESS-FREE HOLIDAY

The holiday season is upon us once again and it brings the usual family get-togethers, parties and shopping. Wouldn't it be great if all that fun could come without the stress that usually goes with it?

Your Family Wellness Chiropractor is one of the few healthcare professionals in your life that recognizes that stress has internal implications. Stress affects your spine by causing the muscles in your neck, shoulders and back to contract. Under this pressure, the interference to your spinal nerves may cause additional health issues affecting your overall quality of life. It may seem unlikely, but it really is possible to enjoy a stress free holiday.

Stress-Free Mealtimes

It's no surprise that this time of year is when our nutritional intake takes a backseat to the numerous other things on our minds. Typically, we recognize that the holiday season is going to run roughshod over our diets, with the overindulgences at Thanksgiving dinners and Christmas parties being the biggest culprits.

The truth is that we do have options that can make it easy to feed our family without spending valuable time in the kitchen or making the incredibly unhealthy choice of going through the drive-thru.

Retailers and restaurateurs have come to recognize the value of offering the busy family healthy dinner choices; food that is fast doesn't necessarily mean fast food.

- Curb Side Pickup – several restaurants have added “Curb Side Dining” to their menu. Call or order online, drive to the restaurant, park in the designated parking spaces and someone brings your food right to you
- Orders to Go – most family restaurants have always offered orders “to go”. Know in advance, the healthier menu choices before ordering

- Deli Meals – Increasingly common and convenient are supermarket deli counters. Most offer rotisserie chicken, both traditional and ethnic self-serve hot and cold food counters, and there are salad bars or pre-packaged salads and fresh soups

Feeding your family on a busy night of Thanksgiving preparations or Christmas shopping doesn't have to mean fast food. There are healthier alternatives that are just as easy and cost effective. A deli meal will actually feed a family of four for far less than you would spend at your local fast food establishment.

Stress-Free Holiday Parties

Attending holiday parties doesn't necessarily have to lead to the equivalent of nutritional self-destruction. If you're going to be attending holiday parties this year, here are some healthy ideas:

- Before you leave for the party, have a healthy snack to curb your appetite and avoid overindulging. An excellent choice would be a healthy wrap; using a whole wheat tortilla fill it with protein sources like chicken or beans mixed with vegetables; and the greener the better
- Offer to bring a veggie platter with hummus or a soy based dip
- Alternate every alcoholic drink with a glass of water before and after; this will help to eliminate a majority of the empty calories found in most alcoholic beverages.

Attending a family gathering, an office party or just a gathering of friends does not have to lead to regret; just be cautious and don't overindulge.

Stress-Free Space

It's the time of year when kids are asking for new toys and clothes; and it's no surprise because it's the time of giving. Take this opportunity to teach your children a valuable lesson.

Take three boxes of different sizes and put them in your children's rooms. Have a talk with them about how there are children in their very own neighborhood who won't be getting new toys and clothes for Christmas.

Many parents are going to be shopping at thrift stores because of the economy and wouldn't it be nice for a little boy or girl who doesn't have very much to find one of their toys wrapped up under the tree? Encourage your children to put their old toys, games, books, etc. in the largest box. In the second largest box have them throw all of their clothes that they never wear or that no longer fit.

Then, in the smallest box, allow them to toss the items that they just can't bear to part with, that have sentimental value, but that they don't need taking up space in their room any longer. This box should then be transferred into a sturdy container and put in storage.

This will help your children to de-clutter their rooms. It's editing things out of our life that sometimes gives us the most amount of freedom.

Prepping for Next Year

Every year, when we begin the process of decorating for the holidays there's always at least one thing that we wish we had: the new linen tablecloth with matching runner and napkins, the new table settings and the new centerpiece, the missing ornaments, the figurines, etc. Of course, when we head to the department stores we realize that they're just too expensive and so we decide to wait. The thing is to not wait too long.

Prepare yourself a "wish list" of all the things that you wish you had for your home during the holidays then, when the holidays are over, pull the sales circulars from your local newspaper. All of your neighborhood stores are going to mark everything down to at least half off to try to get rid of it. Take advantage of this wonderful opportunity to buy those things that you've always wanted for your home, only do so economically.

Stress-Free Living

There never seems to be enough time in the day but there are certain things for which you just have to make the time. If you want to avoid some common holiday pitfalls, consider the following:

- Relax and Rejuvenate – Pick one day a week to have Holiday Movie Night and spend time with your family watching "Miracle of 34th Street", "It's a Wonderful Life", "The Santa Clause", etc.
- Get your holiday cards out early – begin carrying a box of Christmas cards with you today. Time spent waiting can be an opportunity to jot personal notes to friends and family
- Don't forget routine exercise – It's really easy to say, "I'll get back to it after the first of the year," but the year goes fast. Whatever you're doing now you should keep doing through the holidays and, if you don't have a routine, now's a great time to start. Just walking ten minutes a day can increase your health and wellness while giving you ten minutes to plan your schedule or menu for the day
- Don't forget your adjustments – keeping your appointments will mean that your body will be functioning at it's best this holiday season

In Summary

The holidays don't have to be spent over-stimulated and stressed out. With just a few minor changes to your regular routine, you too can have a stress-free holiday season!