



OPINION COLUMN

Holiday season health all about choice



By Melissa Carr, Special to 24 hours
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December is party time with holiday work events, family dinners and invitations to friends' houses. Though this can be fun, sweets and treats, alcohol, and over-committed schedules can make it challenging to stay healthy — challenging, but not impossible.

When it comes to scheduling events and outings, if you're a social butterfly, then get out as often as you can and enjoy the season. But if you are more introverted and reserved, you may find all the social activity overwhelming. While extroverts draw more energy from spending time with others, introverts need time to recharge their batteries after social gatherings.

To help manage your stress, grab a calendar and work out which parties you would most like to attend, but reserve some time for rest and restoration. You might also find it easier to arrange small group or one-on-one gatherings, focusing your time on those you feel most comfortable with.

Eggnog and rum, hot toddy and spiced wine may make merry, but we all know that too many make for a sad liver, tired body, pounding headaches and general bad health. It's a good idea to plan ahead. Set in mind the number of drinks you will allow yourself to have before you arrive at the party.

A 'healthy' number of alcoholic drinks per day is up to one for women and two for men. Have glasses of water between alcoholic beverages so that you can slow down your consumption and limit dehydration that contributes to hangovers.

Just as imbibing in boozy beverages is tempting, so too is binging on all the holiday goodies. Enjoy them, but be it in moderation. Before going to a feast, eat a small, healthy meal. This way you are less tempted to overeat.

If you have specific food needs — such as gluten-free, vegan, or dairy-free — offer to bring a dish that you can share. There are even healthy desserts you can make. Chia seeds can be combined with almond milk, cacao powder and honey to make a delicious chocolate pudding.

And remember to set aside healthy time for yourself. Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese medicine can help reduce stress and the negative impacts of unhealthy choices. Don't wait until the New Year to get healthy.

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