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## A Healthier Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving meals usually include an abundance of unhealthy food options, making it easy to stray from proper nutrition until the start of the new year. But if you opt for a healthy Thanksgiving meal instead, it doesn't mean it can't also be enjoyable. With a few changes, you can make your "Turkey Day" an extension of your year-round commitment to good health.

Begin with the elephant in the room: food. You can probably stand to forgo a luxury or two come turkey time. But don't worry; you can still enjoy a delicious meal with the added bonus of feeling much better afterward. Plus, Thanksgiving is just the start of the holiday season, so there will be a lot of large meals to come.

Start by having breakfast. While many

Americans make it a habit to wait to eat until the holiday meal is set out, eating a small meal in the morning can give you more control over your appetite, allowing you to be more selective in your food and beverage choices later on. Keep in mind that you can always have leftovers the next day.

When moving on to Thanksgiving's centerpiece—the turkey—be sure to go skinless. Just 1 ounce of turkey skin contains 80 calories and 2 grams of fat. Also, be sure to use fat-free chicken broth to baste the turkey and to make the gravy.

Next, turn your attention to the side dishes. Substituting skim milk or half-and-half for whole milk and cream in recipes is an obvious choice, as is omitting bacon and cheese from

any casseroles, but how about complementing these sides or ignoring them altogether in favor of steamed or roasted vegetables and cornbread?

If you must have a holiday favorite, make sure it is just that, and not something you consume regularly during the year. And be sure to police your portions, since there are definite consequences to having too much of a good thing.

Once you've made smarter choices regarding your turkey and your side dishes, you may be wondering if there is anything else you can do. There is!

Take a walk early in the day and then again after dinner. It is a wonderful way for families to get some physical activity and to enjoy the holiday together. For those who have the day off after Thanksgiving, plan an additional workout. You will feel like your old self in no time, ready to manage your diet and exercise regimen right away, instead of waiting until Jan. 1.

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## Ebola Outbreak Reaches U.S.

The recent deadly outbreak of Ebola in West Africa—the worst in history—has seized the world's attention, along with news that the virus has shown up in the United States.

Ebola is an acute viral illness characterized by the sudden onset of fever, debilitating weakness, muscle pain, headache and sore throat. People often confuse the illness' early symptoms with cold or flu symptoms.

Ebola is not a respiratory disease like the flu, so it is not transmitted through the air or through contaminated food or water. Ebola can only spread to other humans via contact with their bodily fluids, including saliva, sweat, blood and vomit, so people can only get Ebola from touching the bodily fluids of a person or animal that is sick with or has died from Ebola, or from exposure to contaminated objects, such as needles.

Though the Ebola outbreak has shown up in America, health officials have stressed repeatedly that the general public is at very low risk for contracting the virus, and they are instructing health workers on the proper precautions to take if they are called upon to treat an infected patient.

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# Can You Really Boost Your Immunity?

As cold and flu season rolls around, there are a bevy of products you can turn to that purport to help boost your immunity. But how well do they actually work?

Since the function of the immune system is to react to challenges and develop new defenses, it can be improved. Every time you catch a cold or get vaccinated, your immune system builds a new army of killer T-cells, ready to fight off a future recurrence of the same pathogen.

But there is no nutritional supplement, superfood, or mind, body or spirit technique that will do this for you. Harvard Medical School has stated, “The concept of boosting immunity actually makes little sense scientifically. In fact, boosting the number of cells in your body—immune cells or others—is not necessarily a good thing,” and can lead to autoimmune disease in the case of your immune system.

So while you can’t supercharge your immune system, you can take precautions to prevent getting sick. These include practicing good hygiene (like regular hand-washing), getting vaccinated (including flu shots), practicing food safety, being knowledgeable and vigilant when traveling to foreign countries, drinking clean water and practicing safe sex.

## Lower Winter Fuel Costs



Budgeting money for the holidays is always important, but many people often forget about the increased energy costs associated with winter until they get hit with the bill. Use the following recommendations from the Department of Energy to keep your costs in check this year.

- Cover drafty windows with heavy-duty, clear plastic sheets, or tape clear plastic film to the inside of your window frames.
- Seal the air leaks around utility cut-throughs for pipes, in gaps around recessed lights in insulated ceilings and in unfinished spaces behind cupboards and closets.
- Maintain a regular service schedule for your heating systems. Replace filters once a month or as needed.
- Set your thermostat as low as is comfortable. Turning it back 10 degrees at night or before leaving your home can save around 10 percent of your heating bills.
- Finally, use LED holiday light strings to save on the price of seasonal decorations.

## Sweet Potato Casserole

Skip the marshmallows this year. This five-ingredient sweet potato casserole is low in fat and rich in flavor, and makes for a perfect side to complement your Thanksgiving meal.

- 2 tbsp. low-fat milk
- 1½ tsp. brown sugar
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- ¼ cup quick cooking oats, dry
- 1 can low-sodium sweet potatoes, drained and chopped

Preheat oven to 350° F. In a small bowl, combine milk, brown sugar, cinnamon and oatmeal. Mix well and set aside. In a medium-sized baking pan, add the sweet potatoes so they cover the bottom of the pan. Add the oatmeal mixture on top of the sweet potatoes. Bake for 20 minutes. Serve hot, or refrigerate and serve cold.

Yield: 6 servings. Each serving provides 94 calories, 0.5g of fat, 0g saturated fat, 0mg of cholesterol, 30mg of sodium, 5g of sugar and 3g of fiber.

Source: USDA

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