

ELDER LAW REVIEW

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Holiday Health Tips for Seniors

As we approach yet another holiday season we look forward to visiting family, giving and receiving gifts, and food. Unfortunately the older one gets, the slower their metabolism works and the harder it gets to fight off the holiday pounds. High cholesterol, an increase in blood pressure, and foods that may cause inflammation to joints are a few things to keep in mind as well, particularly for older adults. Below are eight holiday health tips to keep in mind:

1. **Take a Walk after Large Meals**

After large meals it is natural to want to rest or nap. While sleep during the holidays is important, it allows food to sit. As food sits, particularly carbs, it gets stored as fat cells. Throughout life it is important to keep a somewhat active lifestyle to age healthily. A walk, even if it isn't very far or fast, can do wonders for your body both during the holidays as well as the rest of the year.

2. **Wash Hands Frequently**

With family visiting from all over, they can carry all kinds of potentially harmful bacteria. To combat this, just remember to wash your hands. Kids in particular should also wash their hands to both prevent and stop the spread of any sickness going around the house.

3. **Don't Drink Alcohol in Excess**

Most alcohol is loaded with carbs and unnecessarily high calorie counts. The effects of loaded beverages can cause inflammation of the joints, making problematic joints and muscles worse. Instead of mixing alcohol with sodas, try tonic water or diet drinks. Watch out for juice drinks that can carry high levels of sugar. If beer is more your style, try to drink "light" beers. Also, any type of wheat ale tends to carry fewer calories. Even egg nog can be made somewhat healthy with soy milk and skim milk and avoiding whipped cream to save you calories.

4. **Drink Plenty of Water**

With all the food, alcohol and activities your body runs a higher risk of dehydration. Water helps flush out toxins and cleanse the body faster than anything other drink because it contains replenishing electrolytes. Tap water

contains fluoride which is important in retaining healthy dental hygiene. Water can also help stop you from over eating by making you feel full faster. Drink a glass of water after your meal to see if you want more food. Many times, we consume food faster than your body can process it for digestion. While you may still feel hungry and want seconds, your brain is just now getting the message that it is full from the first helping.

5. **Try to Avoid Eating Heavy Meals Late at Night**

Many families start their holiday meals, particularly on Thanksgiving, earlier in the afternoon. While this may happen for a multitude of other reasons, it is actually a great way to stay healthy. The earlier you eat the better the opportunity to burn off your meal. It also decreases the chances of falling asleep while digesting a meal.

6. **Seek Flavoring Alternatives**

Salt is a staple of our culture for our dinner tables. Try to avoid adding it before tasting the food. Often times, there are plenty of additives already in the food; or seek out different spices as alternatives.

7. **Watch your Carbohydrates**

The most common carb is going to be bread. Dinner rolls and biscuits can fill you up fast. The reason for this that carbohydrates are used in your body for energy, so your body almost craves it. Watch how many bread rolls you take at the table. These will also fill you up faster and can increase your risk for overeating significantly. Carbohydrates also can cause inflammation of joints and muscles, particularly along the spinal cord and back.

8. **Keep a Regular Sleep Schedule**

It is recommended for most adults to get 7.5 to 8 hours of sleep each night. While younger family members use the holiday off-time to catch up on sleep and relax, they too get thrown off by a different sleep schedule. If you are normally in bed by a certain time, try to be in bed by that time and wake up when you usually do.

The above are simply recommendations to assist in continuing good health throughout this time of year.

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