Feel Your Best This Holiday Season

Take steps toward feeling your best and get rewarded with your new health and wellness platform! This innovative platform makes it easy for you to bring healthy habits into your busy life. You can set daily goals and track your progress through the program website and mobile app – while earning chances to win great prizes along the way!

FEATURED ACTIVITY

Tiny, Healthy Habits

Learn 8 easy ways to get healthier with the Tiny Healthy Habits activity.

Learn more on page 2

FEATURED ARTICLE

Sanity for the Holidays

Read the Sanity for the Holidays article for 14 ways to enjoy a stress-free holiday season.

Read more on page 4

VIDEO COACHING SESSION

3 Ways to Love Exercise

Join Coach Liz to learn three ways to make exercise fun.

Learn more on page 8

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“You only live once, but if you do it right, once is enough.”

- MAE WEST
FEATURED ACTIVITY

Tiny Healthy Habits – Build a new healthy habit in less than a minute a day!

With your new health and wellness program, focus on one simple healthy behavior each week and take steps toward a healthier you. This activity includes a live video coaching session, access to helpful articles and pre and post activity assessments.

Log into www.magellanhealth.com/member to join this activity and report your progress each week.

**WEEK 1** Drink a glass of water when you wake up

Water is our body’s principal chemical component, making up nearly 60 percent of our body weight. Every system in our body depends on water to function properly. Even mild dehydration can drain our energy and make us tired. Some researchers have even found that staying well hydrated can also help with weight loss.

**WEEK 2** Put on sunscreen each morning

Experts agree sunscreen should be worn any time skin is exposed to the sun, no matter the time of year or weather. Even on a cloudy day, up to 80 percent of UV rays reach the ground and can lead to premature skin aging or skin cancer. Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher for the best defense against the damaging effects of UV rays.

**WEEK 3** Do a plank for 30 seconds

You can get an effective core workout without sit-ups or crunches. The plank exercise is a fabulous core strengthener. A strong core helps reduce the risk of back pain and injury and helps maintain healthy posture. If you are just getting started with core exercises, hold the plank position for a few seconds and work your way up to 30 seconds.
WEEK 4  Write down one thing you are grateful for

Write down at least one thing you are thankful for every day. Research shows that practicing gratitude regularly is an effective way to increase happiness, have fewer physical ailments and increase the likelihood of achieving goals. Begin by simply listing one thing you are grateful for today.

WEEK 5  Fill half your dinner plate with vegetables

Vegetables are high in fiber and low in calories, so they can help fill you up without expanding your waistline. The more veggies you put on your plate the less room you have for higher calorie foods. For main meals, fill half your plate with vegetables. Buying veggies pre-cut or frozen can reduce prep time in the kitchen and will leave no excuses for not putting them on your plate.

WEEK 6  Get up and stretch for 1 minute

Sitting for long periods of time can reduce the circulation of oxygen to the brain and body where it is needed to generate energy. Studies have shown that the longer we sit, the higher our risk of death from multiple causes. Without adequate circulation, your system gets out of balance and can trigger a stress response even when you are doing nothing at all. To optimize energy flow in your body and brain, do some simple, full-body stretching and relax tense muscles, increase your circulation and be more focused when you return to your tasks.

WEEK 7  Get at least 5 minutes of fresh air today

Take a step outside and enjoy a bit of sunshine and fresh air. Exposure to sunlight increases serotonin and melatonin production and boosts energy levels. Even a short break to get outside can help you refocus and refresh, give you a healthy dose of vitamin D, and make you more alert.

WEEK 8  Take 3 slow, deep breaths each morning

Need a quick pick me up? Improve your energy and mood by standing up and taking a few big, deep breaths. While you do this, look up to the ceiling and stretch your arms out wide. Take a deep breath in through your nose, hold it for a long second, and let it out slowly and forcefully. Repeat this several times until your stress melts away. Within about a minute you may find you are feeling a bit refreshed and ready to start your day.

Log into www.magellanhealth.com/member to join this activity and report your progress each week.
A lot of relatives, a lot of food, and a lot of alcohol can be the perfect recipe for fun times and cherished memories. But let’s be honest: Too much family time can be a bad thing. Despite the good eats and time off from work, holidays can take a toll on our emotional and physical wellbeing for a variety of reasons. Don’t fret, though! We’ve got a list of the best ways to make it through the holidays with your fitness, health, and happiness intact.

**FITNESS**

**PROBLEM:** You’re traveling and there isn’t a gym in sight.

**SOLUTION:** Time to get into bodyweight exercises, friend. Weightless workouts are a fantastic, gym-free way to improve balance, flexibility, and core strength, and they carry a lower risk of injury than lifting heavy weights. Lightweight, portable workout gear like resistance bands, yoga DVDs, or a jump
rope are also smart choices for holiday travelers and will help keep your fitness level from dropping too sharply. Who needs a gym now?

**PROBLEM:** Between all your holiday commitments, there’s no time to work out.

**SOLUTION:** Before parties pile up, try getting into the habit of waking up a little earlier to exercise. People who work out in the morning tend to exercise more consistently, and a morning sweat session can get the ball rolling for healthier behavior all day long. One study even found that morning exercise results in more movement throughout the day and less interest in tempting food [1]. If carving out an hour-long workout is tough, divide exercise into five- or 10-minute blocks throughout the day. A couple of quick Tabata circuits can make a big difference in practically no time.

**PROBLEM:** The holiday temptations make it hard to stay motivated.

**SOLUTION:** Set a goal to be accomplished during the holiday season, and tell your friends about it — that way, there’s no backing out! Find a half-marathon to run in January or promise a buddy that you’ll manage twenty pull-ups in a row by the end of the year. Goals, accountability, and shorter deadlines are all key to achieving any milestone, and they’ll keep your head in the game when surrounded by spiked eggnog and movie marathons.

**PROBLEM:** Your family members (or friends) aren’t supportive of your fitness goals.

**SOLUTION:** “Why are you exercising all the time?” You need some meat on your bones!” People who have known you since you were a chubby toddler can sometimes have trouble accepting newer habits. Plus, using treasured family time to go and exercise solo can make them feel snubbed. Instead of going it alone, try inviting family members along for some exercise they can all enjoy, like a brisk walk. It’ll help everyone
de-stress and feel more like a part of your life, and it can probably serve as a good warm-up or cool-down for a more intense workout with a cousin or two.

**HEALTH**

**PROBLEM:** Every holiday meal is gigantic.

**SOLUTION:** The average American will consume between 3,000 and 4,500 calories during a traditional holiday dinner, and for a lot of us, it’s hard to resist the temptation of high-cal, high-fat food when it’s all on the table. While the old trick of loading up on greens and lean proteins holds true, the real secret may lie in managing liquids. Many people mistake thirst cues for hunger, so drink a big glass of water about ten minutes before a meal. It might seem like a big sacrifice, but it’s also important to take it easy with the alcohol. It takes longer to feel full when we drink booze with a meal, plus it tends to make salty, fatty food even more addictive. [2] Add in lowered inhibitions, high calorie counts, and the increased likelihood of drunken spats with relatives, and a low-booze dinner is looking better and better.

**PROBLEM:** The host is always trying to ply you with thirds (and you were full after firsts!).

**SOLUTION:** Any home chef thrills to see loved ones eat their food, but if you’re worried about being force-fed, try initially only filling up half of your plate so that your “seconds” are actually “firsts.” During the holidays or not, it’s a good idea to get in the habit of chewing slowly between bites. This gives the body more time to realize it’s full, helps you to savor the food, and empties the plate more slowly. Pro tip: Put the fork down between bites to help put the brakes on.

**PROBLEM:** None of the special holiday foods you’re eating are particularly healthy.

**SOLUTION:** If you want to see more nutritious options on the dinner table, ask to help prepare the meal. Take charge of roasting the vegetables or see if you can put together a low-sugar dessert. Most holiday chefs will welcome any help in the kitchen.

**PROBLEM:** Sometimes, unhealthy meals are pretty much unavoidable.

**SOLUTION:** The best way to prep the body for a large meal is to do some intense exercise beforehand, like interval training. High-intensity sweat fests empty the body of glycogen, the energy that’s stored in the muscles. Heading into a big meal with low glycogen will ensure that a lot of those carbs will refill those energy
stores instead of heading straight to your waistline.

**PROBLEM:** Mindless grazing on leftovers and snacks.

**SOLUTION:** Having access to someone else’s kitchen (and leftover pie) means it’s all too easy to polish off a bowl of chips in one sitting. Rather than chowing down on whatever crosses your path, try to schedule snacks ahead of time or keep a food journal to become more aware of your food intake. Avoid eating in front of a TV or computer screen (you won’t pay full attention to what’s being eaten) and try chewing gum or brushing your teeth to keep mindless nibbling at bay.

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**HAPPINESS**

**PROBLEM:** Uncle Bob always pushes your buttons.

**SOLUTION:** Some family members seem to know all the wrong things to say (and don’t hesitate to say them). The trick is to stick up for yourself without being aggressive or antagonistic. Don’t be afraid to make it clear (in a firm but polite tone) that you’d rather not discuss your ex-significant other, semester grades, or any other uncomfortable topic. Simply saying, “I don’t feel comfortable talking about this,” will let family members know your feelings without starting an argument. If all else fails, take a 10-minute break from the conversation to meditate or take a short walk. (Calling a sympathetic friend works, too.)

**PROBLEM:** When traveling or hosting, there’s no alone time to decompress.

**SOLUTION:** In the evenings, gather up the relatives and try to plan out the next day so you can carve out some chunks of alone time. If that much forward thinking is difficult, try to wake up a little earlier and pencil in your “me time” while everyone else is still asleep. Remember throughout the day that relaxation can happen in less than five minutes — simply stopping what you’re doing and reflecting for a few minutes will help lower the stressful fight-or-flight hormones that can sabotage an otherwise relaxing vacation.

**PROBLEM:** Your family’s always fighting.

**SOLUTION:** Depending on the kind of fight that’s taking place, a well-timed change of subject can help if the dispute hasn’t gotten too heated yet. Commenting on the food, asking about an absent relative, or suggesting a post-dinner movie (“Has anyone seen anything good lately?”) can distract would-be antagonists. If an impending argument is obvious, take each party aside separately and request that they hold off this year in the spirit of the holiday season. A good approach is to mention a parent or grandparent who will be present (“She’s 85 years old and deserves a peaceful, pleasant holiday”).

**PROBLEM:** Going home can be depressing.

**SOLUTION:** Family time can often bring up troubled memories, and holiday travel puts us in close quarters with people we might never choose to be around otherwise. Set boundaries and find ways
to take a break from all that (unwanted) family bonding: Volunteer as the errand runner, bring a laptop to catch up on work (or pretend to!), and try your best to fit in solo time. Decide how much time you want to spend with your family and plan accordingly — would you be happier if you left a little earlier? Would renting a car give you some more freedom? It’s completely okay to prioritize your sanity and wellbeing over spending time with the relatives.

**PROBLEM:** You expect your family (and holiday celebrations) to be perfect.

**SOLUTION:** Give up all hope — yep, you read that right. Before arriving home, take some time to think of all the ways your family could be perfect... and then recognize that they never will be. You can only control how you behave and how you react to others. Knowing (and accepting) that fact will get you through this holiday and many more to come. So take some deep breaths and try to accept your loved ones (flaws and all) with an open heart. That’s what family is all about. •

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**FEATURED VIDEO COACHING SESSION**

**3 Ways to Love Exercise**

With your health and wellness program, you have access to support from experts who can answer questions and provide motivation at your fingertips. Interact with health coaches one-on-one or join one of our live video coaching sessions.

This month, join the 3 Ways to Love Exercise session and stop making excuses to not exercise.

Too busy? Can’t afford it? Not enough time? No more excuses! Spend five minutes with Coach Liz and learn three easy, fun, free exercises that almost anyone can do anytime, anywhere. Learn how everyday items like a gallon of water, or a cookie sheet can make you stronger. Coach Liz will help you throw out your excuses and find the motivation you need with these three simple and fun exercises... don’t wait!

Space is limited, so register for your spot now by logging into www.magellanhealth.com/member.

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