



No Weight Gain Contest

KEEPING SPIRITS BRIGHT

The holidays—a time of festivities, parties, shopping, entertaining, religious observances, family gatherings, decorating and...stress! With all the extra demands we place on ourselves and the expectations of the season, is it any wonder that most of us feel some stress during the holiday season? The source of holiday stress is simple: when it comes to time, money and social and family commitments, most people try to do too much. Here are some strategies for making your holidays a time of renewal.



- **Plan Ahead.** Nothing creates more holiday stress than last-minute shopping and preparations. Take charge of your holidays in advance by making lists of things to do and setting aside some time each day for them. Consider setting a cutoff date; after that date, things that haven't gotten done will be deferred until next year.
- **Keep it Simple.** A holiday feast doesn't have to be elaborate to be wonderful. Often traditional fare is appreciated most, with guests providing a few of the dishes. When shopping, take advantage of gift-wrapping services. Try shopping at home from mail order catalogs or shop online. Let others compete for the "most fabulous holiday preparations" award!
- **Stay in Budget.** Do holiday preparations strain your budget? Learn to say "no" to expensive holiday ideas. Choose simple, thoughtful or useful gifts over elaborate, expensive surprises. How can you enjoy the holidays if you're worried about paying your bills?
- **Watch your sugar and alcohol intake.** Holidays bring lots of fun treats and desserts, but overindulging can affect your mood and energy levels. Try taking a walk after a big meal in order to boost your metabolism!
- **Stay active.** Exercise has many emotional health benefits, including helping to lift mood and manage stress.

If you are feeling overwhelmed, depressed, or just sort of "blue", help is available through the [Employee Assistance Program](#) (EAP). Services are free, strictly confidential and easy to access.

For an appointment or simply to get more information, just call For more information, please call **1-888-238-6232**.



No Weight Gain Contest

When it comes to relieving stress, more giggles are just what the doctor ordered. Here's why:

Short-term benefits

A good laugh has great short-term effects. When you start to laugh, it doesn't just lighten your load mentally, it actually induces physical changes in your body. Laughter can:

- Stimulate many organs. Laughter enhances your intake of oxygen-rich air, stimulates your heart, lungs and muscles, and increases the endorphins that are released by your brain.
- Activate and relieve your stress response. A rollicking laugh fires up and then cools down your stress response and increases your heart rate and blood pressure. The result? A good, relaxed feeling.
- Soothe tension. Laughter can also stimulate circulation and aid muscle relaxation, both of which help reduce some of the physical symptoms of stress.



Long-term effects

Laughter isn't just a quick pick-me-up, though. It's also good for you over the long haul. Laughter may:

- Improve your immune system. Negative thoughts manifest into chemical reactions that can impact your body by bringing more stress into your system and decreasing your immunity. In contrast, positive thoughts actually help fight stress and potentially more-serious illnesses.
- Relieve pain. Laughter may ease pain by causing the body to produce its own natural painkillers. Laughter may also break the pain-spasm cycle common to some muscle disorders.