



It pays to  
**be well**

November 2024



## Healthy habits for happy holidays

For many people, the holiday season is about joy, fun, and memories, but not always healthy choices. It's easy to be tempted by sugary treats and stressed by a hectic schedule. Despite these challenges, it's possible to maintain a healthy lifestyle and stay in control of chronic conditions during the holidays. Here are 10 quick tips:

1. Plan ahead and eat a healthy meal before you go to gatherings, or bring a healthy dish to share.
2. Use a smaller plate to help control portion sizes.
3. Create fun, active family traditions, like a holiday hike or dance-off. Physical activity helps lower stress, care for your heart, and manage blood sugar levels.<sup>1</sup>

4. If you have diabetes, carry your glucometer with you and test your blood sugar levels regularly — especially if you're trying new foods or indulging a bit more than usual.
5. If you have high blood pressure, check it daily and watch out for packaged foods that are high in sodium, which can make blood pressure higher.<sup>2</sup>
6. Be mindful of how much alcohol you drink. It can cause your blood sugar to drop and increase your heart rate and blood pressure.<sup>3</sup>
7. Consider setting a realistic bedtime and stick with it. When you don't get enough sleep, it not only can make you feel irritable but also can increase your risk of developing conditions such as type 2 diabetes, obesity, and heart disease.<sup>4</sup>
8. Try relaxation techniques like deep breathing, yoga, or meditation to help keep stress levels in check.
9. Keep your favorite water bottle with you throughout the day to stay hydrated.
10. Take note of how much sugar is in your drinks, especially if you have diabetes. It can cause blood sugar levels to spike.<sup>5</sup>

If you have a chronic condition and are enrolled in an Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield health plan, [access ConditionCare via the Sydney<sup>SM</sup> Health app](#). Condition-specific guides and tools and 24/7 nurse support are available at no additional cost to you.

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## Make traditions a treat, not a chore

Holiday traditions offer a chance to build bonds with your family, friends, and community — helping you feel more connected. But they also can feel stressful or even sad, especially if you're mourning a loss. Here are a few ways to enjoy your time-honored traditions by respecting your current needs:

- **Prioritize your favorite traditions** and give yourself permission to skip others if they don't bring you joy or if time or money is a concern.

- **Consider changing a tradition slightly** to better meet your current situation. Scale back on a trip, perhaps, or continue a dinner party tradition with a new group of friends.
- **Focus on traditions that are special to you and your loved ones**, which may be different from those in popular culture.
- **If you've lost someone who was part of a tradition, it's important to accept and respect your feelings.** It's OK to skip or change your activities or add a moment of remembrance.
- **Try to focus on the present moment** during your holiday activities. Mindfulness can enhance your enjoyment and could reduce anxiety.<sup>6</sup>

By being thoughtful about your traditions, you can enjoy the benefits while minimizing the stress. If you have an Anthem health plan and would like help addressing any mental health needs, [access Emotional Well-being Resources via the Sydney Health app.](#)

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## Recipe box

### Head and heart connection: brain-boosting foods

These easy recipes pack much more than flavor. They're made with supercharged foods like blueberries; green, leafy vegetables; and walnuts, which have been found to help protect your heart and mind.<sup>7</sup>

- Recipe for creamy blueberry-pecan overnight oatmeal:<sup>8</sup> Short on time in the morning but want to start the day strong? Try this fiber- and berry-filled breakfast. It's easy to make the night before to be ready for an amazing morning.
- Recipe for green veggie bowl with chicken and lemon-tahini dressing:<sup>9</sup> This make-ahead dish packs in the green, leafy vegetables in a quick and tasty way.
- Recipe for winter salad with toasted walnuts:<sup>10</sup> This quick salad complements any winter meal. Plus, it's full of walnuts, which are high in alpha-linolenic acid (ALA) — a type of omega-3 fatty acid linked to lower blood pressure and improved memory.<sup>7</sup>