



DECEMBER

Did you know... that there are benefits to exercise that you will feel the first time you work out?

Many people find it easier to wait until January 1 to start healthy habits. After all, getting more exercise is a great way to kick off a healthier year.

But, with the tremendous benefits of exercise, why wait? Some people assume that it will take weeks of exercise to start looking or feeling better. You can reap the rewards of exercise – starting today!

These are some of the benefits of exercise that can make your day even better:

- **Better memory and thinking.** If you need to stay focused on something, some exercise may help by promoting better memory and brain performance.
- **Better sleep tonight.** Tired of tossing and turning? People who exercise may fall asleep faster and have better quality sleep that very same night.
- **Less stress or anxiety.** The more you exercise, the better it is for your stress levels. But, even a few minutes of exercise can help improve your mood and lower anxiety right away.

In honor of the holiday season, here are some ways to stay active with your family:

- Walk around the block after a meal.
- Make a new house rule: no sitting still during TV commercials.
- Find time to spend together doing a fun activity: family park day, swim day, or bike day.
- Issue a family challenge to see who can be the first to achieve a physical activity goal.

Managing Stress During the Holidays

Social and economic factors have exacerbated the mental health crisis in recent years. The holiday season can be a stressful time for many, compounding the already existing stress experienced throughout the year. Nearly 80 percent of people are stressed during the holidays, according to the American Psychological Association. To help keep stress from getting the best of you, try these tips:

- **Be selective about activities**

It's the time of year for office parties and traditions spent with family and friends. Instead of trying to do it all, choose just a few activities that you know you can handle – and say “no” to the rest. If you're worried about offending someone, offer to see them another time, such as a lunch date in January.

- **Remember to take time for yourself**

Whether it's a walk outside, sitting quietly with a favorite book, or a warm bath, you need time to recharge. If you don't care for your own mental well-being, you may feel more stressed and overwhelmed.

- **Get plenty of rest**

Although you might be tempted to stay up late wrapping gifts or cleaning your house, don't. Instead, aim to get at least seven to eight hours of sleep. Getting enough sleep helps you to focus and deal with stressful situations.

- **Have a plan**

If you are hosting the family holiday dinner, make a schedule. Plan house cleaning tasks over several days or a week. Make a grocery list and plan to shop a couple of days in advance. Wrap gifts as you buy them, so you're not trying to wrap everything in one night.