

Reducing Stress During the Holidays

by David J. Getoff, CTN, CCN, FAAIM



There are many books available that teach how to diminish stress by prioritizing one's schedule, using breathing techniques, getting sufficient rest, receiving counseling, and much more. All these can be beneficial, but I will address what foods to eat and avoid, as well as supplements that may be helpful in reducing stress, especially during the holidays.

The vast majority of foods offered during the holiday season are made with sugar and flour. Not only do these foods suppress immunity, but they also contribute to how the body deals with stress. Because they are lacking the vitamins and minerals they contained when they were whole foods, the body must use some of its own stores of nutrients and enzymes to assimilate them. This leaves less reserve for maintaining proper physical and mental activity. Reducing, or better yet, eliminating flour, sugar and alcohol in one's diet and replacing them with fresh vegetables, quality animal protein, and animal fats are the keys to maintaining health. The latter will offer the nutrients your cells need, leaving you satisfied with less cravings, more energy, and a better ability to function. There is one side-effect, however: you may lose weight!

Here are my recommendations to help you handle stress and stay healthy throughout the holidays:

- Eat animal protein and fats from *healthy* animals that are eating what Mother Nature intended. Chickens and other poultry should have access to the outdoors and be given organic feed; cattle should be fed grass rather than grains (corn) in a feedlot; fish should be wild-caught rather than farm-raised.
- Replace sugar in your recipes (this includes raw and organic sugar) with stevia, lo han, or yacon syrup. Make your own healthy eggnog with whole, raw milk and cream, raw eggs (from healthy animals), stevia, nutmeg, cinnamon, and other spices to taste. For a delicious

eggnog, see "Healthy Holiday Recipes" on page 23.

- Use only quality fats including coconut, palm kernel, and extra virgin olive oils, butter, and ghee. (Be sure to never heat them even close to their smoking points.) Some companies advertise that their oils are "cold pressed." *Buyer beware:* to speed up the production process, yet claim to not use "heat," many manufacturers use such high pressure in the extraction process that the beneficial qualities of the oil are destroyed. There are still, however, many good manufacturers. Three of my favorites are: Omega Nutrition, Flora and Rapunzel.¹
- Replace wheat flour with coconut or any kind of raw nut flour. An excellent resource is the book, *Cooking with Coconut Flour* by Bruce Fife. (Available from PPNF; see order page.)
- Eat locally-grown organic vegetables and fruit *in season*. Remember, the abundantly healthy tribes Dr. Price studied did not eat fruit year around (except for the Polynesians and others living in tropical environments).

It can be difficult to predict when stress will pop up in your life or when you might need some help "coping." *Adaptogens* are natural herbal products that increase the body's resistance to stress, trauma, anxiety, and fatigue. Their use dates back thousands of years to ancient India and China, but modern study of them did not begin until the late 1940s. In 1947, Nikolai Lazarev defined an adaptogen as an agent that allows the body to counter adverse physical, chemical, or biological stressors by raising nonspecific resistance, thus allowing the organism to "adapt" to the stressful circumstances.² Two formulas I often recommend for my patients are Vital Adapt and Power Adapt, both made by Natura Health Products™ (www.naturahealthproducts.com).

Although there are many single adaptogenic herbs on the market—rhodiola, ashwaganda, and the ginsengs, for example—I have never found one that comes close

to the effectiveness of the Natura formulas. These herbs are nontoxic in recommended doses, and have a normalizing effect on the body.² They should be taken four to six weeks before a stressful season or event. If you only start taking them a few days beforehand, you may not notice any difference in how you feel. That is why I take adaptogens daily—so they will serve me when the time is right.

There are herbal teas that have been used for generations for their calming and relaxing properties. One of the most popular is chamomile which is readily found in most grocery and health food stores. Another lesser-known, yet excellent choice is linden. They are both caffeine-free and not habit-forming, unlike stimulants such as coffee which can cause anxiety and deplete the body of important nutrients. If you must have caffeine, try green tea in moderation. Per cup, it is significantly lower in caffeine than coffee, plus it also contains antioxidants and compounds that are actually calming.

This year, my best wishes to you for a happy, healthy, and stress-free holiday! 📖

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David J. Getoff has a private practice in San Diego, California, where he works with all areas of health and wellness. His course in holistic nutrition, *Attaining Optimal Health in the 21st Century*, is available on CDs, DVDs and MP3 from PPNF (See order page). David's classes are held at the PPNF office (619-462-7600, www.ppnf.org) and are sponsored by the Grossmont/Cuyamaca College Adult Education Department.

References

- (1) www.omeganutrition.com; www.florahealth.com; www.rapunzel.com
- (2) Winston, D, Maimes, S, *Adaptogens: Herbs for Strength, Stamina, and Stress Relief*, Healing Arts Press; 2007. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adaptogen>. Accessed September 24, 2009.

OUR READERS WRITE

This (Summer 2009) is the best journal ever! All the articles were great. I especially enjoyed the article, *Sickness is a Slow Descent From Health*, as it is SO true! I have read this article over the phone to several of my friends. I also shared the article about genetically modified foods with my neighbor, who owns 400 acres of GM corn. She is a health conscious person, buys organic, eats her own grass-fed beef, barter for my free-range, organic chicken eggs, but she had NO IDEA that GM foods were harmful! After reading the article, she said, "I didn't realize I was hurting people with my corn!" Thanks to you, she is now looking into what to do to correct the situation.

Roni Braaton, South Dakota

I just wanted to touch base and let you know that we received the summer 2009 Journal, and I must say, I really respect PPNF and its journalistic integrity. Not many publications/organizations exist like yours, with accurate information about nutrition that is delivered with compassion and calls to action.

Howard F. Loomis Jr., DC



Be an inspiration to others. We invite you to share your success with our readers.

- Has the PPNF message of health and healing made a difference in your life?
- Have Dr. Price's and Dr. Pottenger's powerful discoveries about nutrition made a positive impact on your well-being or that of your friends and family?
- How have these dietary principles helped you to overcome a health challenge?

Please contact Joan Grinzi at joan@ppnf.org or 800-366-3748 (U.S. only) or 619-462-7600