

## Cooking for Special Diets

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

**Holiday eating may mean you are serving food to friends and family members with different dietary needs.** Some knowledge will help you feel more prepared when feeding guests with special diets. Here's what you need to know.

**Gluten-free:** This diet is medically necessary for people diagnosed with celiac disease (1% of the population), or gluten intolerance (6% of the population). Guests need to avoid wheat, rye, barley and anything made with these ingredients, including pasta and bread.

**What's on the menu:** vegetables, fruit, chicken, fish, potatoes, corn and rice.

**Important:** Watch out for condiments that contain gluten. Use dedicated gluten-free utensils to avoid cross-contamination.

**Vegetarian:** About 4% of the population are vegetarian and skip meat, poultry and seafood. About 1% are vegan and avoid meat, poultry, seafood, dairy and eggs.

**What's on the menu:** vegetables, fruit, grains; vegetarian proteins, including tofu, chickpeas, lentils or beans.

**Low carb:** About 7% of people follow a keto or low-carb diet to help manage weight or blood sugar levels.

**What's on the menu:** fish, chicken, cheese and eggs; vegetable side dishes; nuts, seeds and avocados.

**Here are some tips to help accommodate several diets at one table:**

- Ask guests to bring potluck dishes so people with special diets can bring their own safe food.
- Place a list of ingredients next to each dish (use place cards or name tags) so people following special diets know what's in each dish.
- Serve condiments and dressings on the side, so people can eat plain food if needed.
- Plan menus with lots of variety so there are a few foods that everyone enjoys.
- Opt for large charcuterie boards (with or without meat) with a variety of plain foods: sliced vegetables and fruit, cheese, nuts, gluten-free crackers, etc.



## Keep Your Holiday Health on Track

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD



**The holiday season brings happy times with parties and family gatherings.** But it can also bring gift shopping stress and changes to your regular eating habits. Take proactive steps to stay as healthy as possible while enjoying the holidays.

**Holidays are the time of excess.** It's common to spend too much, drink too much and miss out on sleep. The good news is that you stay on track by being aware of your habits.

**Listen to your appetite.** It's fine to have a small serving of all your favorite holiday foods — that's a great part of social events. Just eat until you feel mildly full instead of way too full. Enjoy leftovers instead of overeating at any single meal.

**Enjoy your usual meals and snacks.** Don't skip daily meals to save up the calories for the big party later. Eating well all day reduces overeating at the party.

**Drink moderately.** Moderate alcohol use is two drinks a day for men and one drink for women. Consistently drinking above this amount increases the risk of several chronic diseases, including heart disease and cancer.

**Set a budget and stick to it.** The health of your finances is important, too. Holiday stress — including credit card debt and finding the perfect gift — can be exhausting, lower immunity to viruses and trigger headaches. Stressed trying to find the perfect present? Send gift cards.

**Get enough sleep.** Give yourself permission to say no to extra activities when you are tired. Take a nap and aim for seven to nine hours of sleep per night.

**Be active.** Step away from the holiday hustle and bustle and go for a walk or do your preferred exercise.

# Too Stressed to Think?

By Eric Endlich, PhD



**You may have heard that chronic stress can be bad for your blood pressure and other health measures.** But did you know it can impact your ability to think clearly, too?

**Brain fog is a common complaint among those who experience a great deal of anxiety.** A recent study found that when stress levels are higher, ability to recall items tends to be lower. The body's built-in emergency response, triggered by stress, primes us to make simple split-second decisions (e.g., fight or flight) but is not well-suited to more complex mental tasks.

## Brain fog symptoms include:

- Forgetting what you were planning to do next.
- Completing tasks more slowly.
- Frequent distraction.
- Tiredness while working.
- Difficulty recalling words.
- Disorganization.
- Confusion.



**Naturally, if your symptoms don't improve or if you are concerned,** it's a good idea to consult your health care provider to rule out any nutrient deficiencies or other medical conditions that could be affecting your mental functioning.

## Strategies to manage stress and brain fog include:

- Getting good-quality nourishment, sufficient hydration, adequate sleep and regular exercise.
- Taking breaks from challenging activities.
- Reaching out to friends, loved ones or mental health professionals for support.
- Learning a relaxation technique, such as deep breathing, meditation or guided imagery.
- Designating a worry time when you can jot down your concerns in a journal, and put it away until the next scheduled time.
- Practicing mindfulness by focusing on what your senses can perceive right now.
- Using organizational tools to improve time and task management.

## Q: What is RSV?

**A:** Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a common cause of respiratory tract infections. It can infect the upper respiratory tract and lungs of both children and adults. The symptoms are typically mild and self-limiting in most adults and older children.

**Some people are susceptible to more severe disease,** such as breathing problems that can lead to hospitalization. Infants younger than 12 months, especially premature babies, are more vulnerable. So are older adults and people with chronic heart or lung conditions. In addition, people of any age with a weak immune system may get sicker from RSV.



**An RSV vaccine can help prevent more serious disease.** The CDC recommends the vaccine for the following:

- Everyone 75 years of age or older.
- People ages 60 to 74 with certain chronic health conditions, such as chronic heart or lung disease.
- Adults who live in nursing homes.
- Pregnant women at 32 to 36 weeks to prevent RSV in their infants during the first six months after birth.

— Elizabeth Smoots, MD

## Winter Indoor Exercise Ideas

**When the temperature plummets, you likely want to curl up by the fire with a good book, but staying active in winter is necessary for your health and fitness.** You don't have to go outside to remain active, but there are benefits to exercising outdoors in the winter in colder climates. Those benefits include less heat and humidity, burning more calories in the cold, boosting your immunity and absorbing vitamin D from the sunlight (don't forget SPF 30, broad-spectrum sunscreen).

### Here are some outdoor and indoor activities to consider:

#### Outdoor activities:

- Walking briskly.
- Running or jogging.
- Hiking or snowshoeing.
- Skiing cross country or downhill.
- Snowboarding.
- Ice skating.
- Sledding.
- Shoveling snow.



#### Indoor activities:

- Strength training.
- Swimming.
- Rock climbing.
- Stair walking.
- Yoga, Pilates, spin (cycling) or other class.
- Working out to a streaming fitness video.
- Dancing.
- Tennis, pickleball or racquetball.
- Kickboxing.
- Bowling.
- Roller-skating.



**To stay warm,** make sure you layer your clothing, wear shoes or boots with traction, sunglasses, gloves and a hat. If you're walking or running at dusk or at night, be sure to wear reflective gear.

**Remember:** Warm up before exercising, and cool down after your workout or activity.



The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, **Why Are You So Tired?**, is at [personalbest.com/extras/24V12tools](https://personalbest.com/extras/24V12tools).

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