



You've torn open the pressies, eaten your body weight in snack platters and taken enough happy snaps to leave the paparazzi for dead. Forget Tough Mudder, with shopping mayhem and rampaging relatives, financial stress, late nights, too much TV and over-indulging – the festive season can be the most grueling event on the calendar. It's no wonder that nearly every one of us emerges from it with a New Year's resolution of detoxing, getting fit and losing weight! Surviving these wild times, as Bear Grylls knows, is all about preparation.

Although portrayed in every shop window to be such a happy, festive time (and let's hope we can help make it so), with all the pressure on your body's physiological systems to cope with food, drink, and lack of sleep; it can also be a time of anxiety and even loneliness for some.

What you do on the big celebration day isn't your biggest problem, it's all the other days in between that will determine if your holidays are healthful. The festive season usually poses problems for those who take their nutrition and exercise seriously or even for those who just want to come out of the other side, with any luck, not worse off than when they started. Whether it's the big high calorie meals, the parties, alcohol or general lack of structure, it's easy to lose your way in December. These Survival Strategies may help minimise the festive 'damage' and help you maintain your physique and health, while still enjoying the party season.

1. FESTIVE FEASTING

Over-eating is the Achilles heel of festive season physique maintenance. Not only is it easier to eat poorly when there's large amounts of food in front of you, but you'll also be heading to places where the food is the focus. Now there's no reason not to enjoy yourself and eat well, but try to make some healthy choices; your heart, cholesterol levels, blood pressure and blood sugar will thank you for it later.

Avoid banking calories. Don't cut back all day in anticipation of a big

Festive Follies Survival Strategies

meal, this will only lead to over-indulging as you're starving yourself before standing in front of a variety of high calorie food! The best pre-party food involves snacks that are high in protein and complex carbohydrates (low GI foods). This will help maintain a full feeling. It's also wise to fill up on something healthy before you go and do your grocery shopping to avoid those unhealthy impulse purchases.

Drink water – lots of it. A large glass of water before you start eating can help fill up your stomach and make you feel less hungry and hopefully reduce your intake later.

Portion control. Enjoy your food but don't overdo the serving sizes. Be aware of what and how much you are eating. Maintaining a level of awareness is all you need to keep your food intake in check

Be careful of leftovers. Having high-calorie leftovers lying around the house will almost certainly lead to continuous high-calorie binge eating. Try giving away leftovers to guests or freezing them for another time - out of sight, out of mind.

Chew slowly. Take the time to enjoy your food. Not only will it taste better, it'll also give your body more time to register itself as full.

Pick protein. When choosing which dishes to have, go with the high protein options. This will make you feel full faster.

Ditch added sugar. Be cautious of all the added sugar in those holiday cookies, cakes, and lollies.

Avoid the deep fried. Yes, we know they can be scrumptious, but try to avoid the platters with fried, crumbed and pastry-based morsels, the trans-fatty acids will cling to your liver and arteries like an 8 year old still wanting to believe in Santa.

Wait before going for a second helping. Give your body time to register what it has just consumed.

Know your weakness. Most of us have a soft spot for something sweet or salty. Admitting this is important! Whatever your weakness, it might be best to not eat any at all, as stopping after you have had some, may be harder than resisting altogether.

2. FESTIVE FITNESS

Whilst festive eating may be the Achilles heel of the season, festive exercising, or lack off it, is its partner in crime. When there are presents to buy, food to eat, and parties to attend, it can be easy to push exercise to the back of your mind. You should expect to train a little less, however maintaining some activity level will help your body cope with flushing out toxins and keep your serotonin (happy hormones) up! Try and aim for at least 30 minutes of physical activity each day.

