


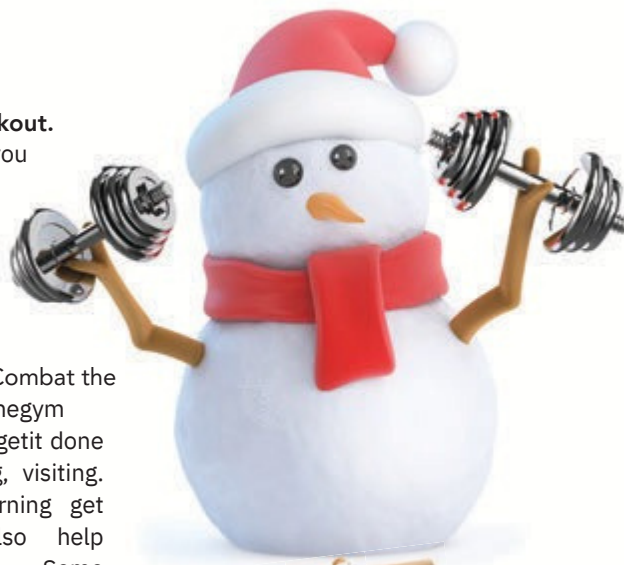
 **Don't skip a strength workout.** Strength workouts will help you maintain muscle and keep your body in an anabolic state. Similarly, due to the high levels of protein traditionally in festive meals, you may find you even gain muscle.

 **Exercise in the morning.** Combat the festive laziness and head to the gym or have a run/walk in the morning, get it done before you start shopping, cooking, visiting. Not only will exercising in the morning get your workout out of the way, it'll also help ensure better behaviour all day. Some studies have indicated that people who train in the morning are more likely to be active for the rest of the day and less likely to respond to pictures of tempting food.


 **Concentrate on your workouts.** If you're strapped for time, increase the intensity of your workouts and drop the time they take to complete. An intense 15 minute workout can be very effective and is better than no exercise at all. For example, using the skipping rope for 15 minutes burns about 190 calories.


 **Join in.** Family gatherings usually involve too much food and too much sitting around. Get outside and join in a game of catch or cricket with the family and kids, or take the dog for an extra long walk together. Be creative and proactive!





3. FESTIVE FIREWATER


On the positive side alcohol can contribute to having a good time, but inevitably the consequences of that may include a bad hangover, weight gain, and increased cortisol levels - a stress hormone that can reduce muscle mass but more importantly give you the 'blues'. Alcohol also acts as a diuretic, the resulting dehydration makes you feel lethargic and gives you cramps and a bad headache. Tips for dealing with alcohol include;

 **Drink a lot of water.** Alcohol can quickly dehydrate your body. Arrive at the party well-hydrated, and try to alternate alcoholic drinks with a glass of water.

 **Look for some lower cal alcohol alternatives.** Beer and wine carry large amounts of sugar and calories. There are alternatives with lower calorie beers or spirits, like whiskey, that can make a big difference in the long run. Also look for lower alcohol content - this may include beer and wine, maybe make a wine spritzer which will help reduce alcohol and calorie intake.

 **Eat before drinking.** Alcohol on an empty stomach is a guaranteed recipe for a hangover. Not only will you feel hungrier when you have alcohol, but your resistance to overindulgence will also be weakened.

 **Be cautious of sugary mixers.** When you're out drinking with friends it's easy to forget how many calories are in some cocktails. For example, a Long Island Iced Tea can have up to 780 calories per serving, whilst a Margarita can have up to 740 calories! Remember the mixers all have tons of sugar too, so be careful of the lemonade, Red Bull, or coke, try to choose the lowest calorie alternative, stick to a gin and tonic or vodka, fresh lime and soda.

 **The hangover hobbler.** As hard as this may be, exercise the next day will help your recovery. A brisk walk, light jog or swim will help work off those extra roast potatoes, and drinks. Getting active will also help you feel normal again, by increasing your circulation, flushing out toxins and lifting your mood. So, as soon as you feel humanly possible, think about doing some activity, even if it's just light.

FESTIVE FINAL WORDS

Don't get overwhelmed by the festive season, be positive by setting some realistic goals to help you stay on-track. This is not the time to be forging ahead with fitness gains or trying to lose weight, it's about maintenance. Factor in some rest time and a few indulgences here and there. Try marking off one or two nights a week to have an early night to ensure your body gets the rest it needs. Remember, this is also your chance to recharge for the following year. So, enjoy spending quality time with family and friends.

