

# 12 Steps to Better Health

## Step 12: December

### Resolve to Improve Your Life Expectancy

One hour of regular exercise can give you about two hours of additional life expectancy.



Activate your immune system



Improve bones and muscles

#### Reduce Your Risk of Premature Death

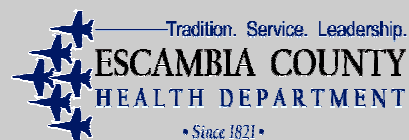
- People who are physically active for about 7 hours a week have a 40 percent lower risk of dying early than those who are active for less than 30 minutes a week.
- You don't have to do high amounts of activity or vigorous-intensity activity to reduce your risk of premature death. You can put yourself at lower risk of dying early by doing at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity.

#### Be Physically Active for Better Health

- Aerobic exercise and other moderate-intensity activities such as walking briskly, performing light yard work, actively playing with children, and biking at a casual pace, activates your immune system, making you less susceptible to illnesses like colds and the flu.
- Muscle strengthening exercises improve your bones and reduce your risk for osteoporosis.

For more information, visit:

[www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity](http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity)  
[www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/physical\\_activity/](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/physical_activity/)  
[www.mayoclinic.com/health/aerobic-exercise/EP00002](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/aerobic-exercise/EP00002)



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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## Tradition Revision!

Are holiday traditions getting in the way of your health goals? We can get so caught up in the “food and gift” part of the holidays that we lose sight of what we are celebrating *and* start the year feeling stressed and unhealthy.



Do you really remember what you served for dinner three years ago? What you really remember is how “Uncle Ted” or “Brother Bill” made it home from his deployment just in time for the holidays, or maybe how you had the family over for the first time to help celebrate in your new home with your new baby?

Food is often central to the holidays; just don't let your holidays revolve around the food. A little creative thinking will help you enjoy a holiday table that is beautiful, festive and healthful.

Here are some tips to help you out:

1. **Develop a new dish or recipe using a few key ingredients of a “traditional” holiday favorite. Replace the high-fat green bean casserole with sautéed green beans seasoned with chopped lean ham and topped with minced sage and toasted pine nuts; garnish with grated lemon zest. Or, replace the high-fat cream soup with a fat-free variety.**
2. **Plan your menu to match how your plate should look. Last month's tip suggests filling half of your plate with fruit and non-starchy vegetables. Set your holiday menu so that half of your table items or buffet lineup is the same! If guests bring items to your event, ask for a fruit or non-starchy veggie dish.**
3. **Plan for cooking time (not just eating time) to be a family event. Give everyone a job in the kitchen or dining room: even the smallest child can help fold napkins or make table centerpieces. Enjoy the time together.**
4. **Make active time a part of your holiday traditions. Plan a family walking tour to see neighborhood decorations, or just go for an after-dinner walk together. Hit the backyard or head down to your neighborhood park for a family game of touch football, basketball or some other group activity.**

