

NAVIGATING HORMONE HEALTH & WEIGHT LOSS CHALLENGES DURING THE HOLIDAYS



Hi, it's Autumn!

I can't believe the holidays are here and so is Belle Vitale!!! This time of year can have an impact on our health, especially when it comes to weight management and hormone balance. It's important to acknowledge, but also understand why weight loss can be particularly challenging during this time of year. It's often due to complex interactions involving our hormones.

Here are five reasons why weight loss might be more difficult during the holidays:

- 1 Increased stress levels:** The holidays can be stressful with obligations and expectations, leading to elevated cortisol levels, which are linked to weight gain, especially around the abdomen. Did you know the fat cells in the midsection of the body have 4 times more cortisol receptors, making it significantly easier to store fat in the midsection when cortisol is chronically elevated? This is known as cortisol belly.
- 2 Irregular eating patterns:** Holiday schedules often disrupt routine eating, causing spikes and drops in blood sugar and affecting insulin balance. Blood sugar influences body fat and body fat influences blood sugar. Therefore, blood sugar imbalances can cause weight gain and weight gain can cause blood sugar imbalances. It can turn into a vicious circle.
- 3 Decreased physical activity:** Shorter days and busy schedules frequently reduce the time and motivation needed for physical exercise, impacting hormones like endorphins and serotonin. Physical activity also plays a role in blood sugar balance and insulin regulation.
- 4 Exposure to rich and processed foods:** From October to January we're bombarded with holiday treats. First the Halloween candy, then the Thanksgiving pies, then the Christmas cookies and chocolates, and this all usually includes higher alcohol consumption, particularly around the New Year. There's nothing wrong with a treat now and then, but these treats are usually high in sugar and fat and void of fiber or other nutrients, which can lead to imbalanced leptin and ghrelin hormone levels, affecting appetite and satiety signals. When we consume these foods regularly for 4 months, it's no wonder we struggle to manage a healthy weight.
- 5 Lack of sleep:** Yes, sleep can have a big impact on your weight. Lack of sleep can disrupt melatonin and growth hormone levels, which are crucial for weight management and overall health. Holiday celebrations and stress often interfere with sleep quality and quantity, which can also lead to more cravings and eating foods higher in sugar. This in turn contributes to blood sugar imbalance.

Being aware of these challenges is the first step toward navigating them.

5 PRACTICAL TIPS FOCUSED ON MAINTAINING HORMONE BALANCE

- 1 Prioritize stress management:** Incorporate practices such as deep breathing, quiet time for yourself, stretching or gentle movement and exercise daily, to help regulate cortisol levels.
- 2 Balance blood sugar:** Balance your meals with good quality protein, healthy fats and carbohydrates, and be aware of fiber consumption, being sure to get enough and practice portion control. Try spacing meals out every 4-5 hours to maintain steady blood sugar and prevent insulin spikes.
- 3 Stay active:** Aim for at least 30 minutes of activity at least 5 days a week. Having a workout plan is always best—but during the holidays, when traveling or you're short on time, you can try taking walks, dancing, or playing physical games with family and friends to boost endorphin levels and help balance blood sugar and insulin.
- 4 Mindful eating:** Tune into your body's hunger and satiety signals, helping to restore leptin and ghrelin balance. It's easy to eat even when you're not hungry when you're surrounded by food and treats. Don't gather and talk at the buffet or table where the food is. Stay out of the breakroom if that's where the cookies and cakes are. Before you reach for a snack or treat ask yourself "Am I really hungry or am I eating this because it's there?" Again, it's ok to have a treat now and then, but if you find yourself doing it every day, it's going to start to lead to all the disruptions and imbalances that we've been talking about.
- 5 Improve sleep hygiene:** Establish a consistent sleep routine by reducing screen time before bed and creating a calming bedtime environment to support melatonin production. Try taking a relaxing bath or shower and practicing self-care to help you unwind.

As we move through the holiday season, remember that this is all about balance. It's not about being perfect or punishing yourself for enjoying the day with family and friends. By focusing on hormone health and making conscious choices, we can enjoy the festivities while still supporting our well-being.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Best,



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