

The

HORMONE CURE

DR SARA GOTTFRIED, M.D.



*Dr. Sara's Holiday Survival Guide:
How to Avoid Sugar Cravings, Weight Gain &
a Guilty Conscience on New Year's Day*

Holiday Survival Guide

The winter holidays are a time of cookies, baked goods, and sugar plums, not to mention parties, gift-buying and big family get-togethers...all raising your cortisol and blood glucose levels. It feels downright rude to decline a plate of homemade brownies or a hors d'oeuvres-filled cocktail party, but they can wreak havoc on your hormones.

If your ambition is to be lean through the holidays, I'm with you on that. Sadly, my most beloved holiday foods – such as garlic mashed potatoes, Yorkshire pudding, dark chocolate anything – are just the refined carbohydrates that most strongly and negatively regulate your insulin, and even more sadly, insulin then tells your body to store fat.



We know that sugar is responsible for a long list of health issues, so I've put together a survival guide for the sweetest, most carb-filled time of year. Our goal? Celebrate New Year's Eve feeling confident, lithe, and like you've not just survived the holidays without gaining fat, but thrived.

I. Defeat Your Sugar Cravings

Sometimes when your body craves one thing, it needs another. When your brain tells you it needs sugar, NOW, it may be because of a lack of protein in your diet. Eat the amount of protein I recommend, which is 0.75 to 1 gram of lean protein per pound of lean body mass.



Another way to cut down on sugar cravings is to eliminate caffeine and get the sleep you need. We know that cutting out caffeine will boost your quantity and quality of sleep. You can also stabilize cortisol with 200 mg of Rhodiola once or twice per day.

2. Supplement Your Sugar Strategies

The following supplements have been shown to reduce sugar cravings:

- **Glutamine 500-1000mg** - empty capsule on the tongue when you have a sugar craving.
- **5-HTP** - If you choose to use this to help combat your sugar cravings, I recommend you work with a [Gottfried-trained practitioner](#). Follow directions on the bottle. 5-HTP must NOT be taken with a prescription antidepressant because of the risk of serotonin syndrome. A typical dose is 50-100mg at night, and twice per day (max 300 mg per day).
- **Tyrosine** - 1,000 mg/day
- **Probiotic** - I recommend that you work up to 15 to 50 billion CFU daily, but do it slowly.

3. Navigate Holiday Parties Like a Pro

DON'T ARRIVE HUNGRY. Filling up on healthy food before you go will help you only eat the couple of things you really want to try - instead of gorging on everything.



DRINK RED WINE INSTEAD OF MIXED DRINKS - AND LIMIT YOURSELF TO 1-2 GLASSES. After that, consider switching to sparkling water (drink it out of a wine or champagne glass so it still feels celebratory). If your weight is creeping up, nip it in the bud, and consider taking activated charcoal before you drink alcohol or Food of Unknown Quality (FUQ – for instance, you don't know if it's organic or contains GMOs or gluten).

FOCUS ON THE CONVERSATIONS AND EXPERIENCE INSTEAD OF THE FOOD. Get curious about the people there. Take pictures. Play a game. Dance your heart out.

4. Make a Swap

If every event seems centered on candy canes and gingerbread, try to change the focus. Switch from a cookie exchange to an ornament exchange. If your friends want to meet for hot chocolates, opt for a walk instead. If treats are an absolute must, go with high-quality dark chocolate instead of something high in carbs and low in nutrients.

When it comes to making your own daily meals, try the *no-white-stuff* diet made famous by Oprah herself. That means white sugar, sugar substitutes, flour, and gluten should be exchanged for high-fiber, nutrient-packed alternatives like dates and quinoa. I also urge you to shift to less calorie-dense foods, such as apples and celery, instead of rich, sugary, and calorie-dense foods like ice cream.



5. Make a December Resolution

Instead of waiting for New Year's Eve to dedicate your time to healthy eating and exercising on the regular, start those habits *now*. No one says you can't incorporate delicious veggies and excellent workouts into your holiday celebrations...and you'll have a month's head start on all those January detoxers.

6. Stress Less for Sweet Relief

High cortisol is often a precursor to issues with insulin sensitivity, weight gain, and--that's right--sugar cravings. If you have a high level of stress in your life (and let's face it, during the holidays, we're all stress cases), your issues with sugar and weight gain may be tied to chronically elevated cortisol levels.

You can manage your stress response and your cortisol levels with yoga, deep breathing, meditation, and reducing your caffeine and alcohol intake. That last part may sound like a monumental task during the holidays, but rest assured that a humming metabolism and saying goodbye to a sweet tooth is more than worth it.

7. Manage Your Metabolism

Blood sugar, stress, and your metabolism are closely tied to one another; if one is off, there's a good chance the other hormonal process is struggling to keep up. A sluggish thyroid means weight gain, a bad mood, and thinning hair. If you suspect your thyroid is dragging, I recommend the following:

- Eliminate gluten from your diet. If you have a gluten sensitivity or even celiac disease, gluten could be the reason you're overweight, fatigued, and bloated.
- Balance your levels of copper (look for a multivitamin that contains it), selenium (22 mcg per day), zinc (less than 50 mg per day), and iron (50-100 mg per day). All are crucial for proper thyroid output.
- Add vitamin D to your daily regimen. The best food sources are liver and low-mercury fish such as herring, sardines, and cod. Sunshine is still the best way to get vitamin D, but my advice is not to overdo it.

8. Wonderful Workouts

Most people see exercise as an integral part of a weight loss strategy. I agree, but I also think that many people use the wrong types of exercise. Intense cardio and high impact workouts actually raise cortisol instead of lowering it, which can lead to weight *gain* rather than loss. Instead, I always recommend targeted exercises that have been shown to balance hormones and drop pounds. Here are my favorites:

- Yoga
- Pilates



Holiday Survival Guide

- Interval training
- Barre classes, such as The Dailey Method
- Step counting—Aim for 12,000 steps per day. Setting the goal to walk 12,000 steps will increase your activity level every day, even if you don't make it to the full goal.

9. Focus On Small, Manageable Goals (& Put on Your Skinny Jeans Twice/Week)

I don't recommend weight loss during the holidays; I recommend maintenance. But we need to track maintenance. Have you noticed that wearing black yoga pants every day doesn't keep you honest about weight gain at your waist and hips? *Me too.* Whether you're trying to maintain weight or just navigate the holidays healthfully, breaking a larger goal ("I want to fit into my totally hot dress on New Year's Eve!") into small, concrete goals ("I will wear my jeans – the ones that don't lie – twice per week for the next four weeks.") is far more effective. Keep fat burning at an optimal level by burst training four times per week.



10. Create Your Food Code (+ Practice Forgiveness)

No one is perfect and the holidays are a trying time for even the most organized among us. But my advice is to create your food code now. Your food code is your operating instructions – the rules that you will operate within until 2014. Here's an example of my food code (I'm a bullet point gal, who groups ideas into sets of threes):

- *"I will eat when I'm hungry, and take 3 deep breaths before each meal."*
- *"I will pause and chew until my food is liquefied at least three times during each meal."*
- *"When I'm tempted to eat sugar or other refined carbohydrates, I will hit the pause button and ask what I'm most needing. Usually I need to call*

Holiday Survival Guide

a girlfriend, text one of my sisters, and find a more evolved solution. I choose not to eat for emotional reasons.”

Another motto that I live by is that **imperfect action trumps perfect inaction**, which I am paraphrasing from Harry Truman. For example, if you indulge one night, don't let it ruin the next seven. Practicing forgiveness towards yourself and others has been shown to lower cortisol levels, which can upgrade your mood, your weight loss, and your overall hormonal balance. Pick yourself up, roll out the yoga mat and get back to habits that make you feel good inside and out.

Sara Gottfried, M.D. teaches women how to balance their hormones naturally so they can rock their mission. She is a Harvard-educated physician, speaker and New York Times bestselling author of *The Hormone Cure* (Simon & Schuster, 2013). She is board-certified in Obstetrics and Gynecology, and is regularly featured in magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour*, *Redbook*, *O Magazine*, and *Yoga Journal*, and TV including *The Ricki Lake Show* and *20/20*. Known for effortlessly blending the seriousness of women's health with playfulness and humor, Dr. Sara's mission is to help women lose weight, feel great and vital from their cells to their soul. Learn more at www.saragottfriedmd.com.