

Inside Integrative Medicine

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Integrative
Medicine
Virtual Group
Classes

Handling Holiday Stress: The Importance of Mind-body Practices

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For most people, the holidays are filled with joy and excitement, yet they can often be accompanied by stress. For people with cancer and their loved ones, holiday stress can be heightened due to emotions running higher than normal, expenses for gifts, travel, pressure to make the holidays special and perfect, difficulty maintaining healthy eating and exercise habits, and other obstacles that are thrown in the way. In addition, having cancer often brings on additional physical limitations due to symptoms such as fatigue, nausea, or other symptoms, making it more challenging to participate in social gatherings and outings. This is a time to harness your social support networks and prioritize engaging in stress management activities.

Managing stress is critical for so many reasons. Studies have shown that chronic stress literally speeds up the aging process. Chronic stress can negatively impact every physical and biological system of our bodies and activates key cellular processes that allows cancer cells to grow. Evidence suggests that through these stress-induced biological changes, chronic stress can promote cancer growth and progression of disease. At times, the stress we experience can feel overwhelming, and it is hard to know where to start when it comes to managing stress.

The good news is there are many approaches to stress management; some are conventional approaches like working with a psychologist or counselor, and then there are many mind-body practices like yoga, meditation, or other behavioral strategies. A study compared physical activity, mindfulness meditation, and heart rate biofeedback and found that each worked equally well in reducing stress. It is important to also know that engaging in stress management does not just make you feel better, but it also activates key biological processes to help control cancer growth.

With all the different strategies available for reducing stress, which is the best? The answer is the one you will do every day and make it a part of your life. When dealing with the stress of the holidays, here are a few things to keep in mind:

1. Be aware of triggers for stress and monitor your stress level: Check in with yourself to determine if your stress is increasing. Listen to your body. Oftentimes, your body might give you signals, such as an increase in fatigue, pain, or heart rate, to let you know something is off. Figure out what makes you more stressed and try to manage or avoid these triggers.

2. Delegate, prioritize, and keep it simple: You may consider lowering your expectations of the holidays. Instead of trying to do everything yourself, delegate to others and prioritize what really matters.

3. Manage the inevitable stress: Take a breath, set aside time for yourself, and learn to use mind-body techniques such as yoga, meditation, mindfulness, etc. A simple way to practice abdominal or belly breathing is by inhaling deeply through your nose, allowing your diaphragm to expand, and exhaling slowly through your mouth; repeat this, focusing on the rise and fall of your abdomen.

4. Seek help: If you feel as if you can't manage the stress on your own, talk to a spiritual advisor, counselor, or trusted friend or family member. You do not have to do this alone; many resources are available.

We offer online audios and videos that can be watched on demand. Please see links below:

Integrative Medicine Center: Audio and Video https://www.mdanderson.org/patients-family/diagnosis-treatment/care-centers-clinics/integrative-medicine-center/audio_and_video.html

Mindful Breathing: Practicing self-care <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=desktop&v=DLkoZtiXeqQ>

Meditation Practice: Body Awareness https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EuhV_S650Yw&t=21s

Patients and caregivers are encouraged to take advantage of the many free mind-body classes (see page 2) available through the Integrative Medicine Center. Have your MD Anderson provider submit an online consultation request for an Integrative Medicine Physician Consultation to discuss mind-body practices as part of an integrative approach to your cancer care. Recommendations may include outpatient clinical services such as a health psychology or Yoga/Meditation consultation. To sign up for a group class, call 832-750-3685.

Integrative Oncology Consultation

Our physicians can give guidance on achieving a comprehensive and integrative approach to your cancer care via MyChart/Epic Zoom.

Exercise/Physical Activity Consultation

A senior physical therapist provides recommendations on achieving safe and optimal exercise during each consultation via MyChart/Epic Zoom.

Oncology Acupuncture Treatment

Acupuncture is a safe and often effective medical treatment that can be used to manage side effects from cancer and related treatments, including nausea and vomiting, pain, neuropathy, hot flashes, fatigue and dry mouth. Cost: \$80 per treatment.

Oncology Massage Treatment

Oncology massage may help patients address anxiety, relieve pain, decrease fatigue and improve sleep quality. Treatments are \$55.

*Prices for IMC services may be subject to change depending on insurance coverage.

View audio and video resources online: www.mdanderson.org/integrativemedcenter

Health Psychology Consultation

A licensed clinical psychologist will provide both evaluation and interventions to help with lifestyle change and address symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression via MyChart/Epic Zoom.

Yoga/Meditation Consultation

Yoga/meditation lowers stress, depression, and anxiety, improves sleep, memory, physical functioning, and overall quality of life, as well as increasing spiritual well-being. A yoga/ meditation therapist would provide interventions via MyChart/ Epic Zoom. Cost: \$50 per session.

Nutrition Consultation

A registered dietitian provides personalized nutrition counseling and education to help patients manage side effects and reach their goals during and after cancer treatment. Education emphasizes a whole food, plant-based diet for optimal health via MyChart/Zoom.

Music Therapy

Individual music therapy is provided by a board-certified music therapist (MT-BC) and involves engaging in music interactively in a variety of ways, with outcomes including anxiety reduction, fostered well-being and exploring ways of reconnecting to music for daily quality of life. Cost: \$50 per session.

How to Register for our Virtual Group Classes:

1. Call Integrative Medicine Center at 832-750-3685.
2. All classes are free.
3. Complete e-update *liability waiver and telemedicine consent in MyChart at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled class.

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Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Yoga for Health 10:30–11:30	Yoga Nidra 3:30 - 4:30	Yoga for Health 10:30–11:30	Pranayama/Breathing 10:30–11:30	Yoga for Health 10:30-11:30
Connect & Reflect with Music 1:30 - 2:30	<i>2nd Tues.</i> 5:00 - 6:00 <i>4th Tues.</i>	Healing Through Writing 2:00 - 3:00 <i>2nd Wed.</i>	<i>1st Thurs.</i> 3:00 - 4:00 <i>3rd Thurs.</i>	

Group Class Descriptions:

Yoga for Health: Features a gentle form of yoga, including stretching, breathing, relaxation, and meditation techniques.

Yoga Nidra: This is a guided meditation in the supine position to bring you into a state of deep rest.

Healing Through Writing: Using expressive writing as a tool to identify and process difficult emotions in a supportive environment.

Pranayama/Breathing: The practice of Pranayama involves breath regulation through various breathing exercises.

Connect & Reflect with Music: A interactive and supportive music group, led by a Board-Certified Music Therapist, using music engagement and conversation to enhance well-being and encourage connectedness. No music experience is required.

Vegan Apple Sausage Stuffing

Total Time: 35 minutes, Servings: 6

Website: <https://www.pcrm.org/good-nutrition/plant-based-diets/recipes/sun-dried-tomato-lentil-loaf#ingredients>

Ingredients:

- 1 loaf or 7 c (315 g) French bread, cut into large cubes
- 1 carrot, chopped
- 12 celery sticks, chopped
- 1 yellow onion, chopped
- 8 oz (227 g) vegan apple sage sausage, diced
- 1/4 c (36 g) roasted chestnuts, chopped
- 1 tsp (5 mL) sage, chopped
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) ground flaxseed
- 1 c (240 mL) low-fat nondairy milk
- 1 c (240 mL) low-sodium vegetable stock
- 1/2 tsp (2.5 mL) salt

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 375 F (191 C). Spread cubed bread on a sheet pan and toast in oven, about 5 minutes. Set aside.
2. Puree carrot, onion, and celery in a blender or food processor until it becomes a fine pulp. Set aside.
3. Set a large saute pan to medium heat and add the vegan sausage. Cook sausage, stirring frequently until slightly brown, about 5-7 minutes. Remove from pan and set aside.
4. Add vegetable puree to saute pan, reduce heat to low, and cook until almost dry, about 7 minutes. Remove from pan and set aside.
5. In a large bowl, combine sausage, vegetable puree, bread, chestnuts, and chopped sage.
6. In a medium bowl, create the flax egg by combining ground flax seed and 2 1/2 tbsp (37.5 mL) of water. Let sit for 5 minutes. Add in vegetable stock, salt, and milk and whisk well. Pour this over the bread mixture and fold to combine.
7. Place mixture in an 8-by-12-inch (20-by-30-cm) baking dish and bake uncovered for 30 minutes, or until top is golden brown.
8. **Notes:** A stick of celery is also called a rib of celery. A celery stalk is the whole bunch! Unsweetened soy milk works great, but any low-fat, unsweetened option will do!

