

# HEALTH BITS

A SERVICE OF THE CBC HEALTH CARE COMMITTEE

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## Heart Health during the Holidays

### Statistics:

- The number of heart-related deaths in the US increases by 5% during the holidays
- Daily visits to hospitals for heart failure can increase by 33% during the holidays.



### During the holidays people are:

- Eating more
- Drinking more
- Lacking physical activity

All of these things add up and place the body under stress, which TAXES THE HEART, making it work harder!

### Contributing Factors:

- Stress spikes our cortisol levels causing the heart to work harder
- Skipping medications: the body is unable to normalize itself. Heart rate and blood pressure are not being regulated

- Holiday weight gain: just a few extra pounds have lasting effects and can be difficult to drop after the holiday season
- No exercise: not allowing the heart to work enough, effecting its endurance and ability to work properly
- Overeating and drinking: consuming too many calories in a short time frame
- Too much salt intake: body unable to eliminate large salt intake causing increased workload on the heart

### How to Stay Heart Healthy during the Holidays:

- Stay active- get up and move, spend 30 minutes a day engaging in physical exercise
- Drink water- before and during each meal
- Snack wisely- avoid foods with high salt content. Pack healthy snacks when traveling.
- Manage stress-avoid situations of high stress, moderation is key, set priorities and schedule down time to recharge.
- Get adequate rest-set a schedule
- Portion control- avoid overeating during holiday meals

Last but not least, remember to relax, spend time with family, have some laughs and enjoy the season!

### ***Try this healthier version of the sweet potato casserole! Plus, its cooked in the crock pot saving oven space and time!***

Sweet potatoes are a good source of vitamin C and beta carotene (beta carotene is converted to vitamin A once in the body and helps support a healthy immune system and bone growth). It is also a good source of potassium, fiber, and vitamin b-6!

### Ingredients:

- 3 ½ - 4 pounds sweet potatoes (about 5 medium)
- 2 medium apples
- ½ cup water
- ¼ cup honey
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter (optional)
- ½ cup milk
- ½ cup coarsely chopped pecans, lightly toasted

### Directions:

1. Scrub and peel the sweet potatoes, then chop them into 1-inch cubes and place in slow cooker. Peel the apples and chop them into 1-inch pieces; add to the slow cooker. Add the water, honey, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt. Cover and cook on high heat for 3-3 ½ hours, until sweet potatoes are very soft.
2. Use a potato masher to mash the sweet potatoes and apples until your desired level of smoothness. If you like, you can also use an electric mixer to achieve a smoother consistency.
3. Add the butter (if using) and milk, and stir until well combined. Sprinkle on the toasted, chopped pecans and set your slow cooker to the "Keep Warm" setting for serving.

