

Staying Well on Vacation

By Catie Fitzgerald, Nutrition & Health Coach

The long days of summer beckon us to take time off from work to enjoy a vacation, spending quality time with family, resting and pursuing recreational activities. For many of us this time off is long overdue! As a result, we enter the season of “fun under the sun” fatigued, stressed, and experiencing a variety of health issues such as insomnia, weight gain, digestive difficulties (bloating, gas, constipation, etc.), allergies, and skin conditions (acne, psoriasis, etc.). We may even experience “leisure sickness”, the condition of feeling ill during vacation such as headaches, muscular pain, and cold/flu-like symptoms (Vingerhoets, Van Huijgevoort, & Van Heck, 2002, Abstract).

How can we enjoy our vacations free of the conditions that plague many of us when we finally take well-deserved time for ourselves? Symptoms such as...

- Muscle and joint pain from overdoing it on the physical activity front
- Flu and/or cold symptoms
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Sleep issues and/or jet lag

The CIGS Approach

I propose a 4-prong approach to staying healthy during your vacation: CIGS. This is the only time that CIGS denote something healthy for you!



CONDITION your body to be active



nourish your **IMMUNE SYSTEM**



prime your **GI TRACT** for proper function



reduce the impact of **STRESS** on your body

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CONDITION your body to be active

- For at least 30 days before your vacation, engage in the activities you plan on doing during your trip such as hiking, biking, swimming, etc.
- Start with short-duration low-intensity sessions of activity, increasing the duration and intensity gradually each week.
- Work with a professional fitness coach to customize a program suited to your needs. (See resources)



nourish your **IMMUNE SYSTEM**

- Consume foods rich in vitamins A, B-complex (B1-12, folate), E and K and key essential minerals including zinc and selenium to support healthy T-cell function, and provide antioxidant activity to support healing of sites of inflammation (Mateljan, 2007, p. 795)
- Increase your intake of fruits and vegetables so you can benefit from the phytonutrients they contain (i.e., lycopene, resveratrol, beta-carotene, etc). These compounds have strong antioxidant activity.



prime your **GI TRACT** for proper function

- Drink lots of water. Without sufficient water, your GI tract can't digest, absorb, and move nutrients to your cells. Drink 1 liter of water for every hour you travel on a plane to stave off dehydration and jet lag.
- Be physically active daily. Exercise improves motility in the GI tract so get moving to relieve constipation!
- Eat in a relaxed environment to prevent the stress response which can set off a cycle that results in gas, bloating, and diarrhea (Lipski, 2012, p. 212).



reduce the impact of **STRESS** on your body

- Improving your physical response to stress helps bolster your immune system.
- To reduce the physiological impact of stress, practice deep breathing throughout the day.
- Identify the "stimulants", the situations that trigger your "flight or fight" stress response. Once you know your triggers, you can "script" healthy responses for the future.

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After Vacation

When you come back from vacation, apply the four R's to make your transition smooth.



Reflect



Re-establish Routines



Restock



Recalibrate

Allow three days back home before returning to work. Doing so allows you to smoothly transition from vacation mode to work mode. During those three days,...

- **Reflect** – Write in your journal about the experiences you had during your vacation. Take the time to organize and label your photos (digital or printed). Share them as albums online with friends and family.
- **Re-establish routines** – Go to bed at a decent hour (ideally no later than 10 pm) and set your alarm for the time you normally rise for work. Resume activities such as group exercise classes, coffee with a friend, cooking, and house and yard care.
- **Restock** – Go grocery shopping to load your fridge and pantry with healthy whole foods so you can replenish your body's store of nutrients. Vacation is hard work!
- **Recalibrate** – Plan your schedule and to-dos for your first week back to work. Revisit your personal and professional goals.

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Nourish Your Immune System

Source	Vitamins			Minerals			
	A, E, K	B's	C	Selenium	Iron	Copper	Zinc
Asparagus	X	X	X		X	X	X
Beef*		X		X			X
Bell pepper	X	X	X				
Bok choy	X	X	X		X	X	X
Broccoli	X	X	X	X	X		X
Cashews						X	X
Cauliflower	X	X	X				
Cod*		X		X			
Cremini*	X	X		X		X	X
Collard greens	X		X		X	X	
Kale	X		X		X	X	
Lamb*		X		X			X
Mustard greens	X	X	X			X	
Papaya	X		X			X	
Romaine		X			X	X	
Pineapple		X	X			X	
Salmon*		X		X			
Sardines*		X		X		X	
Scallops*		X		X			X
Sesame seeds				X	X	X	X
Shrimp*		X		X		X	X
Spinach	X	X		X	X	X	X
Swiss chard	X	X	X		X	X	X
Tuna*		X		X			
Turnip greens	X	X	X			X	

* This food is a rich source in B12.

(Mateljan, 2007)

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RESOURCES

Find a certified fitness professional to help you condition your body.

- IDEA Health & Fitness – <https://www.ideafit.com/find-personal-trainer>
- American College of Sports Medicine – <https://certification.acsm.org/pro-finder>
- The American Council on Exercise – <https://www.acefitness.org/acefit/locate-trainer/>

Quality counts so choose whole organic food.

- [Can organic foods really improve my health?](#)
- [EWG's 2017 Shoppers Guide to Pesticides in Produce](#)
- [Thrive Market: Organic, Healthy Food Delivery Online](#)

Cook with whole foods in season for maximum nutrition.

- [Center for Urban Education and Sustainable Agriculture](#) – Seasonal recipes
- [Rebecca Katz Recipe Box](#) – Recipes and a blog centered on whole organic healthy eating
- [Detoxinista](#) – Recipes focused on whole food, plant-based meals

REFERENCES

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