



10 WAYS CHRISTMAS IS GOOD FOR YOUR HEALTH

Dr Patrick Basham¹ & Dr John Luik²

1. DRINKING ALCOHOL...

There is overwhelming scientific evidence that moderate drinkers live longer than teetotalers. Moreover, the recent Million Women Study in the UK, which looked at the link between drinking and cancer, found that nondrinking women had a higher incidence of cancer than those women who had one drink a day. American researchers found men consuming two alcoholic drinks a day had a 36 percent less risk of developing diabetes.

2. OVEREATING...

There is considerable evidence that one's longevity is directly linked to one's plumpness. In a massive study of weight and mortality, Dr Katherine Flegal from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that the longest lived were not the thin but rather those who were overweight, a finding confirmed in many other studies. Increases in overweight and obesity have been paralleled by falls in US mortality from coronary heart disease and stroke. And life expectancy continues to increase, despite the supposed massive increase in obesity.

¹ Patrick Basham directs the Democracy Institute and is a Cato Institute adjunct scholar. He coauthored the bestseller, *Diet Nation: Exposing the Obesity Crusade*.

² John Luik is a Democracy Institute senior fellow and coauthored *Diet Nation*.

3. FATTY FOODS...

British research has found that high-fat cheeses, such as stilton, protect against tooth decay. They are also rich in cholesterol from which the hormones estrogen, testosterone, and progesterone are synthesised. Cholesterol is also essential to the production of vitamin D, which regulates calcium levels. And while at the dining or buffet table, be sure to pile on the turkey. It's full of tryptophan, which raises the level of serotonin in the brain, which in turn reduces stress, improves mood, and improves sleep patterns.

4. CHOCOLATE...!!!

Few women need a research study to tell them that chocolate boosts mood, activity levels, and even sex drive – well, dark chocolate, anyway. Nevertheless, scientists inform us that dark chocolate may also reduce risk of a stroke or a heart attack. American research published in the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Science* found that cocoa, when consumed at doses equivalent to two dark chocolate bars per day for humans, significantly reduced chemical markers for heart disease in a group of lab animals on a high-fat diet.

5. ENJOY BEING LAZY...

The body uses down-time to repair tissues and rebuild immunity. American researchers have found that unrelieved stress can decrease one's immunity by up to 40 percent. Consequently, Professor Peter Axt argues that time spent lazing around each day is a better way than exercise to ensure you live longer. In *On the Joy of Laziness*, Axt writes, 'We always think we have to be *doing* something but *doing* nothing...could be better'.

6. OR, WALK IT OFF...

A post-Christmas dinner walk is almost certain to make one feel better. An article published in the *International Journal of Clinical Practice* found two dozen physiological ailments and psychological conditions that walking may prevent.

7. ALL IN THE FAMILY...

Spending Christmastime with people one loves – assuming that includes one's family – can improve one's mental health. Psychologist Edward Diener's research has found a very strong connection between research subjects' unhappiness and their poor social relationships. Economist Andrew Oswald controversially theorises that better family relationships would be far better for societal well-being than a financially richer society.

8. LAUGHTER'S STILL THE BEST MEDICINE...

Whether one finds comic relief in a favourite TV programme or a favourite relative, American researchers have found that laughter boosts one's immune system, reduces tension and stress levels, exercises one's heart, and releases feel-good hormones in the brain.

9. KEEP THE CARDS COMING...

For most of us, our mood improves when we receive a Christmas card. American research has found that the more Christmas cards we receive, the higher our self-esteem and the better our mood.

10. POWER OF PRAYER...

'Tis the politically incorrect season, so we would be amiss to ignore a study recently published in the *British Medical Journal* that found the act of praying slows down one's breathing rate and has a calming effect on the heart.