

Savor the Season, Not the Sugar

Avoiding sugar during Christmas may seem counterintuitive, but it's one of the best ways to protect your health during a season filled with indulgence. From gingerbread cookies to spiked cider, sugary treats are everywhere — and that can lead to weight gain, fatigue, and increased risk for chronic illnesses like type 2 diabetes and heart disease. [Research](#) even shows sugar triggers addictive responses in the brain, fueling cravings and mood swings.

But skipping sugar doesn't mean skipping joy. Small changes like swapping festive cocktails for herbal tea, enjoying naturally sweet snacks like fruit or cinnamon-baked apples, or limiting desserts can reduce your sugar intake while still honoring tradition. The American Heart Association [recommends](#) just 6 teaspoons of added sugar for women and 9 for men per day, a limit many far exceed during the holidays.

Choosing mindful alternatives supports energy, immunity, and mental wellbeing. So this season, celebrate with connection and creativity, not just candy. Your body and mind will thank you in the new year.

BENEFIT SPOTLIGHT

How Healthcare Advocates Protect Your Health

Hospitals can be intimidating spaces filled with unfamiliar routines, fast-paced decision-making, and technical medical language. Patients often find themselves overwhelmed and unsure of their rights or options. That's where professional healthcare advocates come in.

A professional healthcare advocate works on your behalf to make sure you understand your medical options, get the care you need, and aren't left navigating the healthcare system alone. These advocates can be independent professionals, hospital-based patient advocates, or even specialized nurses or social workers trained to guide you through medical decisions.

Their role can cover explaining diagnoses and treatment options in plain language, helping coordinate care between multiple doctors or facilities, reviewing medical bills for errors and negotiating costs, ensuring your healthcare rights are protected, and providing emotional support and reducing stress during challenging times.

Many people don't know they could benefit from a healthcare advocate until they're knee-deep in stress. If you feel overwhelmed with medical information, dealing with a complex or chronic illness, facing a major medical decision, confused by medical billing or insurance, or you just don't feel heard, a healthcare advocate could help.

If you think you might need a healthcare advocate, the first step is knowing where to look. Here's how to start:

- Many hospital facilities have patient advocacy departments.
- Organizations like the [Patient Advocate Certification Board \(PACB\)](#) or the [Alliance of Professional Health Advocates](#) can connect you with certified professionals.
- Some insurers provide access to advocacy services as part of their benefits.
- Friends, family, or support groups may know trusted advocates who specialize in your condition.

When choosing an advocate, look for someone with experience in your specific needs, clear communication skills, and a commitment to putting your goals first. Many offer a free initial consultation so you can see if it's the right fit before committing.



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