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Enjoying the Festive Season without the Hormone Meltdown



DECEMBER is here — the month of Christmas festivities. But while it's "the season to be jolly," many women approach January feeling sluggish, bloated, and regretful about the festive indulgence.

If you're navigating hormonal conditions such as polycystic ovaries, pre-menstrual symptoms or (peri) menopause, you may already be managing challenges such as hot flushes, poor sleep, exhaustion, bloating, anxiety, and weight gain — and Christmas excesses can intensify them.

But with a few mindful tweaks, you can still enjoy the celebrations without dread or guilt, starting the new year feeling balanced, bright, and recharged.

HIT THE RESET BUTTON

Seeking a "perfect" Christmas can be exhausting, especially with hormone changes thrown in the mix. Fluctuating or lower oestrogen levels can affect the brain's emotional centres, triggering anxiety and low mood. Add festive stress, and it's a perfect storm for emotional overload.

Stress hormones also disrupt sleep,

energy, and weight regulation, so finding ways to decompress is essential.

Why not schedule some relaxation time. This could mean taking a few minutes for breathing exercises or mindfulness (apps like Calm or Headspace can help) booking a massage, joining a yoga class, or simply going for a peaceful walk.

And don't go at it alone! It's important to share the load. Opening up to loved ones about how you're feeling can help them understand and support you — and it's the perfect moment to delegate a few tasks while you have their attention!

'What matters most is finding small moments of peace and joy that feel right for you'



CARE FOR YOUR GUT

Festive buffets and endless snacks are hard to resist, but constant grazing on sugary or fatty foods can upset digestion and worsen bloating, reflux and constipation. A sluggish gut can also affect mood, sleep and energy.

That doesn't mean cutting out the joy of Christmas food, just balancing indulgence with nourishment. Here are some tips for a happier gut:

- Try stick to three meals a day to curb those cravings and avoid the temptation for constant nibbling.
- Include fibre and protein-rich snacks like nuts, fruit, or crudités with hummus instead of crisps and canapés.
- Chew slowly — it aids digestion and reduces bloating.
- Sip on warm water with ginger or lemon which activates digestive enzymes and improves digestion and bloating.
- Add fermented foods (kefir, sauerkraut, live yoghurt) or a probiotic supplement to support healthy gut bacteria. Don't forget your prebiotics too, found in onions, flaxseed, berries, and those famous Brussels sprouts.

BE MINDFUL OF DRINKS

Alcohol and even many non-alcohol alternatives are often overlooked as being unhealthy as they are not food. They are surprisingly high in sugar and calories, leaving us feeling bloated and sluggish, so it's worth checking the labels.

Alcohol is also a depressant, increasing anxiety and low mood; a diuretic, leading to dehydration and overactive bladder symptoms; and for many women, can intensify perimenopause symptoms such as disrupted sleep, night sweats and hot flushes.

That's not to say, go tee total, just pace yourself. Alternating between alcohol and water improves hydration, digestion, boosts energy, and even helps with dry skin, symptoms all heightened around menopause.

KEEP MOVING — EVERY LITTLE HELPS

When the weather turns cold and dark, motivation to exercise can seem impossible. Be kind to yourself but try and be consistent. Even a short walk, stretch, or light home workout can lift mood, support metabolism, and ease symptoms like fatigue and poor sleep. Every step truly counts.



PRIORITISE REST

Between late nights and early mornings, sleep often becomes the first casualty of the holiday season. Combine that with hormonal fluctuations, and insomnia can hit hard. Burning the candle at both ends leaves us feeling run down and low in mood.

If some late nights are inevitable, balance them with early nights when you can and try to keep to a gentle bedtime routine.

REACH OUT FOR SUPPORT

Whilst December is often portrayed as a month of joy and togetherness, the reality can feel very different for many. The pressure to be festive, the emphasis on family gatherings, and memories of "better Christmases" can make this time of year particularly tough.

If you're coping with grief, loneliness, financial strain, or simply feeling disconnected, remember you're not alone — and it's okay not to feel merry. Taking care of your mental health is more important than any seasonal preparation.

If you need support:

- **Mind** offers advice and resources for

coping during the festive season: www.mind.org.uk

- **Samaritans** are available 24/7, offering free and confidential support — call **116 123** anytime.
- If you're struggling with hormonal conditions, consult a women's health specialist for tailored advice — we are here to support you.

MY GOLDEN TIP — BE KIND TO YOURSELF

However you spend this December, be gentle with yourself. The holidays don't have to look or feel a certain way. What matters most is finding small moments of peace and joy that feel right for you.

Wishing you all a calm, healthy, and joy-filled Christmas.

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