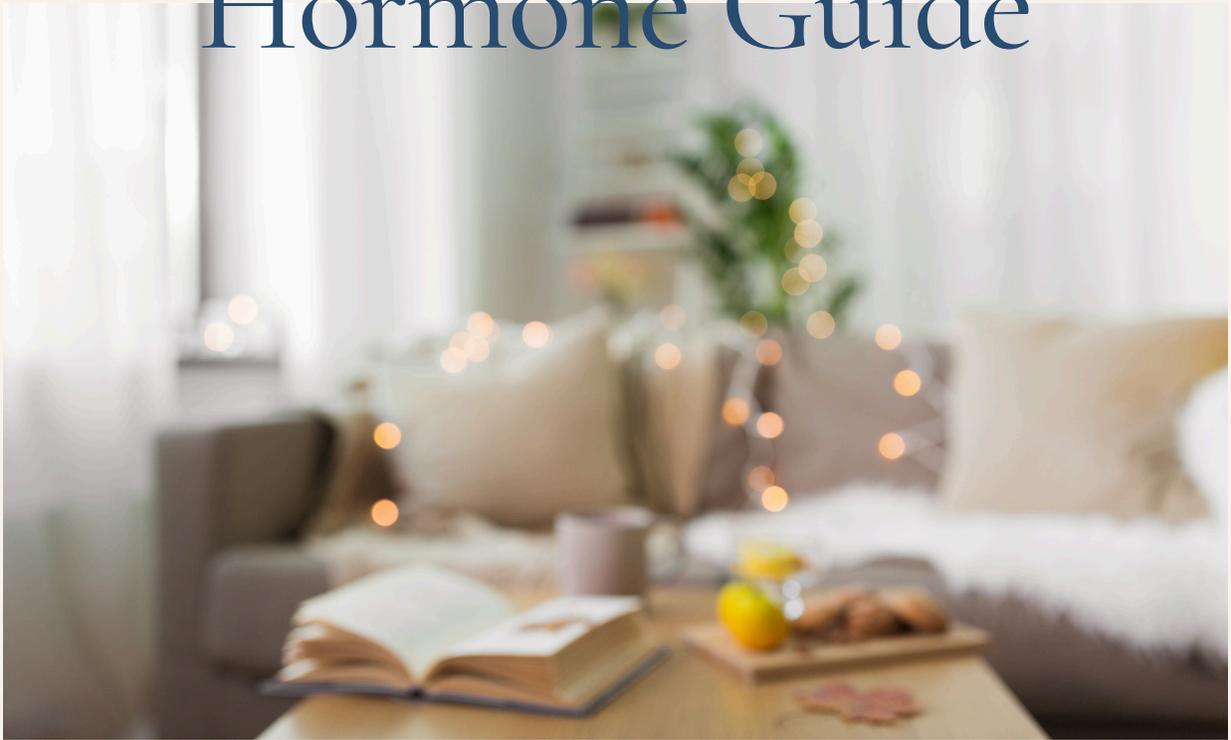


# Your Complete Holiday Hormone Guide



*A wholesome guide to eating, living,  
and thriving through the season*

**BY KARINA BALOLEANU, CFNC**



# Introduction

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The holidays are supposed to be a time of joy, connection, and celebration — or so we're told.

For many women, though, the season brings a familiar mix of pressure and stress: the endless to-do lists, the rich meals, the late nights, and the nagging feeling that your health will take a back seat after all the progress you've made.

If you catch yourself thinking, "I'll start fresh in January," you are not alone. What if this year, instead of swinging between strict rules and total indulgence, you found a middle ground that actually feels good?

I love the holidays. They are my favorite time of year. I also remember the first Christmas I went home after making big changes to my nutrition and lifestyle. I'd learned how blood sugar affects energy, mood, and hormones. But instead of feeling relaxed and confident, I was on edge. I worried about every meal, every treat, every late night. I wanted to feel good, and I wanted to be part of the celebration.

Looking back, I was the healthiest "sick person" in the room — doing all the right things, yet completely disconnected from the joy of the season.



66 *That experience taught me something simple but powerful: health isn't built through perfection or control. It's built through awareness, flexibility, and consistency in the small things.*

With this in mind, here's how this guide can support you during the holiday season. It's designed to help you move through the holidays feeling balanced, energized, and calm, showing you how to protect your progress without giving up the pleasure of the season. You'll find practical, science-informed tips to help keep your blood sugar steady, your hormones supported, and your stress in check — all without rigid rules or restriction.

While the examples are seasonal, the tools work any time life gets busy, whether you're traveling, celebrating, or juggling everyday demands.

My hope is that by the end of this guide you'll feel confident and equipped to nourish yourself this season — body, mind, and soul.

So take a breath, pour something warm, and let's make this holiday season one where you feel grounded, not guilty.

### ✨ Reflection prompt

Before you dive in, pause for a moment and answer this: How do you want to feel when the holidays are over? Energized? Calm? Connected? Grateful?

Hold that feeling with you as you read. It will help you choose what matters most this season.

# About Me

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Hi, I'm Karina. I'm a Certified Functional Nutrition Counselor, wife, and mom to a small human who constantly reminds me what true presence looks like.

I help women restore energy, balance hormones, and reconnect with their bodies through real food and sustainable lifestyle strategies. My approach is rooted in functional nutrition, which means I look beyond symptoms to understand what's happening beneath the surface.

My path here wasn't linear. During pregnancy, I was diagnosed with gestational diabetes, and that became my wake-up call. I still didn't fully listen, so my body kept speaking — through postpartum hypothyroidism, burnout, and persistent gut issues. That pushed me to dive deeper into nutrition, metabolism, and the mind-body connection. I learned that thriving isn't about cutting out every treat or following strict rules. It's about working with your body, not against it.

Through my practice, [Back to Wholesome](#), I help women move past symptom management and uncover root causes. I teach them to read the signals their bodies send and to make choices that bring more calm and confidence — especially during emotionally charged seasons like the holidays.

Because health shouldn't add stress. It should bring freedom.

*Karina*



# Introduction to Hormones

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You might be wondering what hormones have to do with the holiday season.

Hormones are your body's messengers. They coordinate almost everything — from energy and mood to digestion and sleep. When they're balanced, you feel clear, calm, and steady. When they're not, your body lets you know: fatigue, cravings, bloating, irritability, anxiety, or restless sleep are often signs that your internal communication system needs support.

The holidays can easily throw that balance off. Heavier meals, extra sugar and alcohol, less sleep, and added stress can create the perfect storm for hormonal chaos — especially when it comes to two key players: insulin and cortisol.

## **Blood Sugar & Insulin**

Every time you eat, your body breaks food down into glucose (sugar), which enters your bloodstream. Insulin — a hormone made by your pancreas — helps move that glucose into your cells, where it's used for energy.

When your meals are balanced, your blood sugar stays steady, and your energy does too. But when you skip meals, graze all day, or rely on refined carbs and sweets, blood sugar spikes — and then crashes. Those ups and downs can trigger fatigue, cravings, irritability, anxiety, and more. Over time, they also affect your thyroid, sex hormones, and metabolism.

## **Cortisol & Stress**

Holiday to-do lists, family gatherings, travel, and full schedules can leave us feeling more frazzled than festive. In response, your body releases cortisol, often called the “stress hormone.”

# Introduction to Hormones

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Cortisol isn't all bad. It helps you wake up in the morning, handle challenges, and regulate blood sugar and inflammation. But when stress becomes constant — as it often does during the holidays — cortisol stays elevated for too long or at the wrong times.

That's when it starts to interfere with other hormones. Elevated cortisol can:

- Disrupt insulin, causing more blood sugar swings
- Slow thyroid function, lowering metabolism
- Throw off reproductive hormones, affecting mood and cycles
- Alter gut function, impacting digestion and nutrient absorption

The good news? You don't need strict rules or extremes to support your hormones. Simple, steady habits make all the difference. That's what this guide is here to offer — small, practical tools to help your body feel safe, nourished, and supported through the holidays (and beyond) without adding to your stress or to-do list.

## ✨ Reflection Prompt

What signals does your body give you when it's under stress — physical, emotional, or mental?

(Examples: energy dips, sugar cravings, irritability, bloating, poor sleep, anxiety.)

Recognizing your body's signals is the first step toward working with your hormones — not fighting against them.

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# 01

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## Supporting Your Blood Sugar Through the Holidays

Food is one of the biggest sources of joy and connection during the holidays. It's also one of the biggest stressors for your body when balance goes out the window. Between festive meals, endless desserts, and disrupted routines, it's easy to end up on a blood sugar rollercoaster that leaves you tired, moody, and craving more sugar.

The goal isn't to avoid your favorite foods. It's to create steadiness so your body feels safe and supported, even when things get a little indulgent.

Balanced blood sugar means more stable energy, fewer mood swings, better sleep, and calmer hormones. It also means you're less likely to feel out of control around food, because your body's needs are being met.

Let's walk through some practical steps that make this possible — whether you're at home, traveling, or sitting down for a big family dinner or office party.

**And here's the key:** you don't have to do all of these. In fact, trying to do everything might just add stress (and that's the opposite of what we want).

Instead, pick one or two that feel doable right now. You can even start practicing a couple today so that, by the time the holidays arrive, they already feel like habits instead of effort.

## Control What You Can

There will be meals you can't control — and that's okay. Focus your energy on the ones you can, especially breakfast, which sets the tone for your entire day.

### Why it helps:

A balanced meal early in the day supports steadier insulin responses and reduces compensatory cravings later. When your body has enough protein, fat, and fiber, it's less likely to overreact to a sugary or carb-heavy meal later on.

### Simple breakfast guidelines:

- **Don't skip breakfast.** Eat within an hour of waking.
- Focus on protein + healthy fats to stabilize blood sugar, keep you full longer, and avoid mid-morning crashes.
- **Protein goal:** 20–30 grams. Think eggs, Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, sardines, bone broth, or even dinner leftovers. Keep it simple — the less effort it takes, the more likely you'll stick with it.
- **Coffee tip:** If you love coffee, enjoy it after breakfast to avoid spiking cortisol first thing. For a gentler lift, try matcha. And if you're skipping caffeine, a chicory latte is a cozy swap.

### Quick breakfast examples:

- 2–3 eggs + sautéed greens
- Greek yogurt with chia seeds, walnuts, and berries
- Smoked salmon with avocado and parmesan
- Dinner leftovers (yes, perfectly fine!)
- Cottage cheese + berries + [nut-and-seed granola](#)
- Omelette with mushrooms and spinach
- Sardines and avocado paste on [seed crackers](#)
- Smoothie: protein, berries, chia or flax seeds, nut butter



## Start Each Meal with Veggies

Begin meals with fiber-rich vegetables whenever possible. Fiber slows glucose absorption, helps you feel full, and reduces post-meal spikes.

At a holiday meal, that might look like: a small salad, roasted vegetables (potatoes don't count here), a handful of olives, or even the greens on your plate.

Starting with veggies gives your body a head start toward balance.

## Food Order Matters

This is one of my favorite blood sugar hacks because it requires changing nothing on your plate.

Simply eating foods in a different order can make a big difference in how you feel afterward.



Start with **fiber**, then **protein and fat**, and save **carbs** or **sweets** for last.

This sequence slows glucose absorption and keeps energy steadier.

### Holiday examples:

- **Buffet:** Load your plate with vegetables and protein first, then add a smaller portion of starchy sides.
- **Family dinner:** Start with leafy greens, roasted veggies, or a broth-based soup. Enjoy your protein next, with a bit more veggies — and if you want dessert, savor it last.

## Try this Plate Formula:

**Non-starchy vegetables or leafy greens (50%) + Protein (25%) + Fibrous complex carbs (25%)** — then dessert only if you truly want it.

If you know dessert is a yes, you can reduce the carb portion in your main meal to make room for it.



## Don't Arrive Hungry

If you're heading to a party or gathering with an unknown menu, avoid arriving hungry. Ravenous eating often leads to overeating or reaching for the easiest (usually sugary) option.

Have a protein-rich snack or fiber-first bite before you leave or on the drive there. That way, you can enjoy holiday treats without feeling out of control.

### Snack ideas:

- A handful of almonds or your favorite nuts
- Boiled egg + carrot sticks
- Veggie sticks + hummus
- Plain Greek yogurt with a few berries
- Parmesan cheese (naturally lactose-free and higher in protein than meat!)

## Bring a Dish You Love

If you have preferences, restrictions, or simply want to ensure there's something nourishing on the table — bring a dish to share. You'll have something you love, and you'll likely inspire others to enjoy a wholesome option too.

### Ideas that travel well:

- Veggie-based sides with olive oil and nuts
- Protein-forward casseroles or roasted meat with herbed veggies
- Blood-sugar-friendly desserts (grain-free, no processed sugar)

### Try this easy shareable dish:

Maple-roasted carrots with pistachios and lemon zest. Quick to make, easy to transport, and always a crowd-pleaser.



## Smart Restaurant Choices

When eating out, look ahead at the menu and prioritize protein and vegetables.

Skip the breadbasket and be mindful with sauces — they often contain seed oils or hidden sugars that can cause surprising blood sugar spikes.

My rule of thumb when dining out: **keep it simple.**

### Quick guidelines:

- Start with a vegetable starter or salad
- Choose grilled or roasted proteins (steak, fish, poultry)
- Ask for sauce on the side
- If dessert tempts you, share it

## Crowd It Out

Instead of focusing on what not to eat, focus on what to add.

Filling your plate with protein and vegetables first naturally leaves less room for less nourishing options. It's a mindset shift from restriction to abundance.

### Try this:

At your next gathering, make it your mission to load your plate with colorful veggies and satisfying protein before anything else.

Once your body gets enough fiber and protein, you'll be surprised how much less tempting the sugary or starchy foods feel.



These are simple, practical strategies you can lean on this season.

Notice that none of them is about saying “no” to holiday foods — they’re about setting up your body to enjoy them in a way that actually feels good, without the regret or crash afterward.

### ✨ Reflection Prompt

What small change from the list above feels realistic for you this week?

Which one will you try first?

# 02

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## Navigating Sugar During the Holidays



*The holidays and sugary treats go hand in hand, making it easy to go overboard. But high sugar intake can spike blood sugar, increase cortisol, and disrupt insulin balance — all of which can impact your overall hormone health.*

The good news? You don't have to cut sweets out completely. Instead, let's look at a few ways to enjoy them mindfully — without feeling like you've lost control.

### Auditing Your Sugar Intake

Start by simply noticing how often sweets sneak in and where they come from. Reducing excess sugar helps stabilize blood sugar and minimize unnecessary spikes in cortisol and insulin.

Hidden sugars are everywhere — in tomato sauces, salad dressings, bread, fruit juice, and cocktails. Cutting back on these “extras” can make a big difference in how steady your energy feels throughout the day.

## Quick check-in:

Do you have one holiday treat you look forward to the most? If so, let that be your highlight — and let the rest fade into the background.

## ✦ Reflection Prompt

How often do sweets show up in your week — and in what situations? (After a meal, when stressed, while socializing?)

Noticing when and why you reach for sugar is the first step toward making choices that feel intentional, not automatic.

## The 3-Bite Rule

This one's simple but powerful: take three slow, intentional bites of your chosen treat. Pause after those bites and ask yourself: *Am I satisfied?*

Those first few bites usually give you the biggest dopamine hit. Eating beyond that doesn't add much more satisfaction — it just adds more sugar. By slowing down and savoring, you can fully enjoy the moment and maintain a healthy relationship with food.

## Extra Tips for Balance

- **Share a dessert.** Split a treat when dining out or at gatherings to enjoy the flavor without overindulging.
- **Have sweets after a balanced meal.** Protein, healthy fats, and fiber slow sugar absorption and prevent blood sugar spikes.
- **Plan — don't deprive.** Avoiding sweets completely can backfire, leading to stronger cravings and eventually overeating. Instead, plan to enjoy a small portion and follow the 3-bite rule.



## Swap Out Refined Sugars

When making desserts or snacks at home, experiment with natural alternatives like honey, maple syrup, dates, or coconut sugar. They still affect blood sugar but are less depleting than refined sugar and come with trace minerals and nutrients.

For a more stable blood sugar response, try these natural, plant-derived sweeteners:

- **Allulose** — Acts like sugar in baking but without glucose spikes or feeding harmful gut bacteria. Start small, as larger amounts can cause bloating or gas.
- **Monkfruit** — Has no impact on blood sugar or insulin and doesn't feed bacterial overgrowth. It's pricier and less accessible, and research is still limited.
- **Stevia** — The most researched option. It's blood sugar-friendly, easy to find, and supports gut balance. Choose pure versions without fillers. Some people feel a bitter aftertaste.

You can also make your sweets more nutrient-dense and blood sugar-friendly by:

- Using nut flours (like almond or coconut) instead of wheat or all-purpose flour.
- Choosing high-quality dark chocolate instead of sugary milk chocolate.
- Making homemade berry jams with lemon juice and chia seeds.

If traditional holiday recipes are part of your family's story, tweak them gently — swap flours, try a new sweetener, or create your own wholesome traditions.

Some of my favorites that have become holiday staples include [Perfect Paleo Brownies](#), [Pecan Pie Cookies](#), and [Salted Pistachio Chocolate Torte](#).



## Ask Yourself the Key Question

Here's a question I often ask myself — especially during holidays, vacations, or when eating out: ***Is this worth the spike?***

Sometimes the answer is yes — your grandma's once-a-year pie probably is. And if it is, savor it wholeheartedly, without guilt or regret.

Other times, maybe not. That brief pause gives you space to choose with intention instead of reacting in the moment.



So remember — it's not about never having sweets. It's about enjoying them in a way that leaves you feeling good afterward, not drained or moody.

Mindful choices now mean you can truly savor the joy of the holidays — not just the sugar.



# 03

## Supporting Digestion During the Holidays

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*One thing that often gets overlooked during the holidays is digestion. We think so much about **what** we eat, but **how** we eat makes a huge difference too.*

Let's start with chewing. Chewing isn't just about breaking food down into smaller pieces — it's actually the very first step of digestion. When you chew thoroughly, you're signaling your body to release digestive hormones, enzymes, and stomach acid. This sets your whole system up to absorb nutrients better and reduces the risk of bloating, gas, or discomfort later. In other words, chewing well supports your gut, your energy, and even your mood.

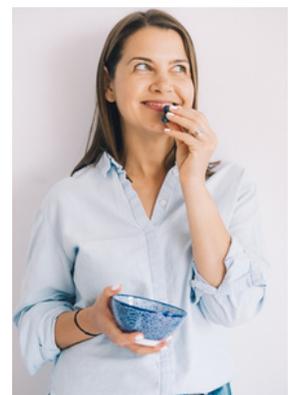
**Here's a practical tip:** aim to chew each bite 20–30 times, until the food feels almost like a puree. It might sound like a lot at first, but even slowing down just a little can make a big difference.

## Mindful Eating Practices

Along with chewing, try to bring a little mindfulness to your meals:

- Sit down and eat in a calm, distraction-free environment whenever you can.
- Take a few deep belly breaths before your meal, or even express gratitude — it helps shift your body into “rest and digest” mode.
- Pay attention to the flavors, textures, and aromas of your food.
- Put the fork down between bites instead of preparing the next one right away.
- Notice your hunger and fullness cues as you go.

Even in the middle of holiday chaos, small pauses like these help your body digest more efficiently and leave you feeling lighter instead of sluggish.



## My Mindful Eating Practice

For most meals, I like to take a moment to ground myself before I start eating by taking three deep breaths. Then I express my gratitude — usually silently — for the nutritious food in front of me, for having the means and access to such beautiful, diverse food, and for being able to share it with my family. Then I begin eating, making a conscious effort to chew each bite longer.

Just this practice alone has had such a big impact on how my digestion feels and my energy levels after meals.

So, as you head into the holiday season, remember that digestion isn't only about food choices — it's about the way you eat too.



A few extra chews, a deep breath before your meal, or simply slowing down can go a long way toward keeping your gut — and your energy — happy.

### ✨ Reflection Prompt

What's one small shift you can make to bring more mindfulness into your meals this season?

Maybe it's chewing more, setting your fork down between bites, or simply taking a deep breath before you begin eating.



# 04

## Mindful Drinking During the Holidays

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*Alcohol has no real health benefits, but it's a staple at many holiday celebrations. And I don't believe in all-or-nothing rules. If you choose to enjoy a drink, a few simple strategies can help minimize the impact on your blood sugar, hormones, and overall well-being.*

## Choose Lower-Sugar Options

Opt for wine or spirits like tequila, vodka, or gin, which are less likely to spike your blood sugar. What makes the biggest difference is what you mix them with.

At the other end of the spectrum, beer and sweet cocktails tend to cause the strongest blood sugar spikes.

## Skip Sugary Cocktails and Mixers

Drinks loaded with sugar can disrupt gut health and cause significant blood sugar fluctuations. Stick to simple mixers like soda water with a squeeze of lime or a splash of cranberry juice.

This goes for mocktails too. Many assume they're automatically a healthier option, and while they'll protect you from the effects of alcohol, they're often loaded with sugar.

## Stay Hydrated

Alternate alcoholic drinks with water to reduce dehydration, support your liver's detox processes, and prevent overconsumption.

**A simple rule of thumb:** one glass of water per alcoholic drink.

## Prioritize Quality Over Quantity

Limit yourself to one or two drinks, savor them slowly, and focus on enjoying the company and the atmosphere rather than overindulging.

## Time It Right

Try to enjoy alcohol earlier in the evening, spacing it as far from bedtime as possible. While a nightcap might help you fall asleep faster, it disrupts deep sleep and can leave you feeling groggy the next day.

So the goal isn't perfection here — it's intention. With a little mindfulness, you can enjoy festive drinks and still wake up the next day feeling good.

# 05

## Key Nutrients to Prioritize

The holiday season can be a whirlwind, making it easy to overlook nutrient-rich foods.

Between the extra sugar, alcohol, and lack of sleep, your body may be running low on the very nutrients it relies on for energy, stress resilience, and hormone balance.

Here are a few key ones to focus on this season.

### Magnesium

Stress, sugar, and alcohol all deplete magnesium — a powerhouse mineral involved in more than 300 processes in the body, including energy production (ATP), hormone regulation, and stress response. It also supports steady blood sugar, immune function, and quality sleep.

- **Food sources:** Leafy greens, nuts (cashews, almonds), seeds (pumpkin, sunflower, sesame), salmon, and dark chocolate.
- **Lifestyle tip:** Try an Epsom salt bath to relax your muscles and boost magnesium absorption through the skin.
- **Supplementation:** Magnesium glycinate is gentle on digestion and highly bioavailable, making it a great choice for most people.

### Probiotics and Prebiotics

Gut health is foundational to hormone balance, digestion, and mood regulation.

Probiotics add beneficial bacteria, while prebiotics feed them — together, they help create a thriving gut ecosystem.

- **Probiotic foods:** Sauerkraut, fermented vegetables, kimchi, kefir, and yogurt.
- **Prebiotic foods:** Garlic, onions, leeks, apples, artichokes, beans, and asparagus.

A good rule of thumb: include one probiotic or prebiotic food daily to keep your gut — and mood — happy.

## Vitamin D

Vitamin D acts more like a hormone than a vitamin, influencing mood, energy, and adrenal function. During the darker winter months, getting enough sunlight can be difficult, so food and supplementation become more important.

- **Food sources:** Fatty fish (salmon, mackerel), egg yolks, butter, and liver.
- **Supplementation:** Testing your levels is the best way to personalize your dosage. Work with a healthcare provider to find what's right for you.



You don't have to obsess over nutrients, but weaving in a little extra magnesium, adding fermented foods, and checking your vitamin D levels can go a long way toward keeping your energy and mood steady this season.

### ✦ Reflection Prompt

Which of these nutrients could you focus on adding more of this week — magnesium, probiotic foods, or vitamin D?

Start small. Even one simple addition can make your body feel more supported and resilient through the holidays.



# 06

## Prioritize Restful Sleep

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*The holiday season often disrupts sleep routines — whether it's late-night gatherings, rich meals, or extra alcohol. Yet restful sleep is essential for keeping blood sugar steady and hormones balanced.*

Sleep is when your body repairs and restores itself. Poor or insufficient sleep disrupts glucose metabolism, raises cortisol (which can spike blood sugar), and lowers leptin, the hormone that regulates appetite and energy balance.

In practical terms, a rough night leaves you tired, moody, and more likely to crave high-carb foods the next day. Your body also processes sugar less efficiently, leading to larger blood sugar swings. Repeating this pattern over the holidays can result in fatigue, mood shifts, and hormonal imbalance.

## Strategies for Better Sleep During the Holidays

### Create a Wind-Down Routine

Ease your body into rest with a calming bedtime ritual. Even a few intentional minutes can make a big difference. Try:

- Reading a few pages of a book
- Listening to calming music
- Journaling your thoughts
- Short meditation or breathing exercises
- Legs-up-the-wall pose or [yoga nidra](#)

These small rituals signal your nervous system that it's safe to rest, supporting deeper, restorative sleep. Even if you "lose" 10–15 minutes of sleep, winding down before bed significantly improves sleep quality.

### Get Morning Sunlight

Exposure to natural light early in the day helps regulate your circadian rhythm, making it easier to fall asleep at night. Spend 10–15 minutes outside shortly after waking — a quick walk, or even sipping your morning drink on the balcony works. Consistent light cues tell your body when to be alert and when to wind down.

Protecting your rest during the holidays is one of the best gifts you can give yourself — for your mood, energy, and hormones.

#### ✨ Reflection Prompt

Which small sleep-supporting habit could you start this week? Even one simple shift can help your body feel more balanced through the season.

# 07

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## Stress Less: Finding Calm Amid the Chaos

The holidays bring joy and celebration, but they can also come with added stress and pressure. Managing stress effectively is crucial for supporting your nervous system, aiding digestion, stabilizing mood, balancing blood sugar, and preventing emotional eating. Regular relaxation practices activate the parasympathetic nervous system, helping you feel calmer, more grounded, and resilient.

### My Favorite Stress-Relief Practices to Try

#### Move Your Body

- Take a simple post-meal walk to manage blood sugar, improve digestion, and clear your mind. If you're eating out, try parking a few minutes away to naturally include some movement.
- Morning walks set a positive tone and provide natural light exposure, which supports your circadian rhythm.
- If going outside isn't possible, get creative: play with the kids, do squats in the kitchen, or host a mini dance party.

#### Set Boundaries

Prioritizing your well-being sometimes means saying "no." Clear limits protect your mental and physical health.

Family dynamics and holiday traditions can be triggering, especially if your health choices differ from the majority. You don't have to change anyone else or judge them — just state your boundaries confidently and kindly.

Example: if your grandma insists you “empty your plate,” acknowledge her love while staying true to your priorities. Mindfulness and preparation can make this feel much easier.

## Gratitude Journaling

Spend a few minutes daily noting what you're thankful for. Gratitude has been linked to reduced stress and better sleep, and it also lightens your mental load.

If writing isn't practical during busy holidays, practice gratitude mentally — in the shower, while making coffee, or before bed.



## Calming Techniques / Breathwork

Practice calming techniques such as:

- **4-7-8 Breathing:** Inhale 4 counts, hold 7, exhale 8.
- **Physiological Sigh:** Take a full inhale, then a smaller second inhale, exhale slowly through your mouth.
- **Alternate Nostril Breathing:** Inhale through one nostril, close it, exhale through the other, then switch.

Apps like [Open](#) or [Calm](#) offer guided meditation and breathwork if you want extra support.

## Deep Connection and Conversations

Meaningful interactions with friends and family provide a grounding sense of connection. Community and belonging aren't just emotionally rewarding — they're strong predictors of longevity and well-being.

## Protein for the Nervous System

Sufficient protein intake supports neurotransmitter production, which directly impacts mood, stress response, and sleep. Include protein-rich foods in your meals to help your nervous system stay balanced.



Even small, consistent practices — movement, breathwork, or a brief moment of gratitude — can help you navigate the holiday chaos with more calm and clarity.

### ★ Reflection Prompt

Which stress-relief practice could you realistically include this week?

Maybe it's a short post-meal walk, a few minutes of gratitude, or a simple breathing exercise. Start small — even tiny shifts make a meaningful difference.

# HOLIDAY CHECKLIST



## NUTRITION & BLOOD SUGAR

- Control what you can
- Have a protein-rich breakfast
- Have coffee AFTER breakfast
- Start each meal with veggies
- Food order matters
- Don't arrive hungry
- Bring a dish you love
- Smart restaurant choices
- Crowd it out

## NAVIGATING SUGAR

- Be mindful of your sugar intake
- The 3-bite rule
- Share a dessert
- Have sweets post meal
- Pair sweets with protein, fiber & fats
- Plan, don't deprive
- Swap out refined sugars
- Ask yourself "Is this worth the spike?"

## DIGESTION

- Focus on how you eat, not just on what you eat
- Eat in a calm, distraction-free environment
- Practice gratitude
- Take 3-4 deep breaths before meals
- Pay attention to texture, flavor, etc.
- Notice hunger & fullness cues
- Chew your food well

## NAVIGATING ALCOHOL

- Choose low-sugar options
- Skip sugary cocktails
- Quality vs. quantity
- Stay hydrated
- Time it right

# HOLIDAY CHECKLIST



## NAVIGATING SLEEP

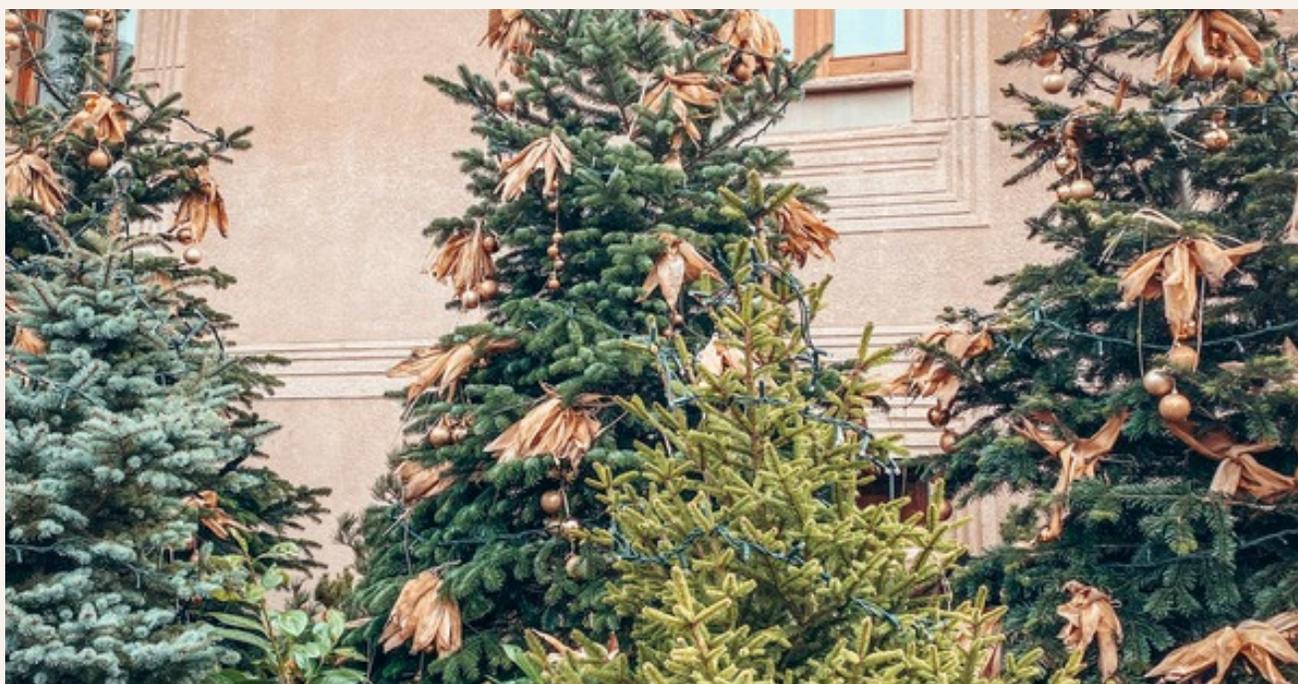
- Create a wind-down routine
- Read a few pages
- Journal your thoughts
- Listen to calm music
- A short meditation/breathing practice
- Legs up the wall
- Yoga nidra
- Get morning sunlight

## NAVIGATING STRESS

- Move your body
- Take a post-meal walk
- Set boundaries
- Gratitude practice
- Calming techniques/breathwork
- EFT tapping
- Connection & deep conversations
- Protein for nervous system support

## NUTRIENTS

- Magnesium: calm + sleep
- Prebiotics/Probiotics: gut + hormones
- Vitamin D: mood + resilience



# Carry the Season Forward

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*The strategies in this guide aren't just for the holidays — they're tools you can bring into everyday life. From mindful meals and balanced blood sugar to stress relief and restorative sleep, these small shifts create a ripple effect that supports your health long after the celebrations end. Think of this season as practice, a gentle opportunity to tune into your body, honor your needs, and savor moments of joy — because thriving isn't about perfection, it's about presence, balance, and consistency.*

# Additional Resources



## [Nest Wellness](#)

My go-to for delicious plant-powered recipes that are gluten-free, refined sugar-free, and low glycemic. Subscribe [here](#) for more holiday-inspired recipes.

## [Cooking in Color](#)

A wonderful resource for gluten-free, refined sugar-free meals made with real, whole ingredients that support steady blood sugar. Currently, free access.

## [Open](#)

My favorite mindfulness app, including guided meditation, breathwork, movement, and sound meditation. Try it FREE for 30 days [here](#).

## [To Be Magnetic](#)

A neuroscience-backed self-development tool to uncover limiting beliefs and reprogram your subconscious. **Enjoy 15% off the membership with code KARINA1602.**

# Conclusion and Next Steps

The holiday season is a time for joy, connection, and celebration. Choose one or two strategies from this guide that resonate with you and try them out. Remember — you don't have to implement everything perfectly. This guide is here to help you stress less, not add more to your plate. Focus on what feels good, doable, and sustainable, and celebrate even the smallest wins.

*The holidays are also a wonderful time to reflect and set intentions for the year ahead. Small, mindful choices now can create momentum that carries into the new year — whether it's maintaining balanced blood sugar, nourishing your body, or managing stress with more ease.*



## Next Steps:

- **ROOTED – The Circle of Becoming:**

A 12-week guided program for women to reconnect with their bodies, honor their cycles, and build sustainable habits around nutrition, sleep, movement, and stress. With weekly guidance, practical tools, and community support, you'll feel grounded, energized, and confident in your health. The next cohort begins early 2026. Join the **waitlist!**

- **Plan Ahead for 2026:**

Start the new year feeling supported — **book your free Discovery Call** to explore the path that's right for you.



# Disclaimer

This guide is for informational and educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace medical diagnosis or treatment. Decisions related to your health, nutrition, or medical care should be made in consultation with a qualified healthcare provider. Karina Baloleanu expressly disclaims any liability for loss or damage caused directly or indirectly by the use of the information provided in this guide.



[hello@backtowholesome.com](mailto:hello@backtowholesome.com)  
[www.backtowholesome.com](http://www.backtowholesome.com)