

## Healthy Holidays Challenge Overview

### What is the Healthy Holidays Challenge?

The Healthy Holidays Challenge is designed to encourage employees to maintain (or improve) their healthy habits during the holiday season (Thanksgiving through New Year's). This eight-week program encourages good eating habits, being physically active, managing stress and getting enough sleep during the holiday season. By adopting healthier habits, employees will feel better, improve their mental health, and decrease their risk factors for chronic conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and other lifestyle-related illnesses.

The holiday season between Thanksgiving and New Year's can be stressful for many people, even if it is also joyful. The increased obligations, shorter days, family conflict, financial strain or loneliness can turn an otherwise happy season into a very stressful time of year. While not everyone celebrates holidays during this time of year, practicing healthy habits benefits everyone all year long. This eight-week program is designed to encourage healthy habits throughout the holiday season.

### How does the Healthy Holidays Challenge work?

1. **Pick dates** to run the challenge. This program is designed to start before Thanksgiving and end after New Year's Day. The challenge can be shortened to 6-weeks if desired.
2. **Decide on prizes** if you plan to offer them. *It is the employer's responsibility to ensure that incentives and prizes comply with all ACA and IRS regulations. Consult with your legal counsel for guidance.*
3. **Customize the tracker.** Add instructions for turning it in (when, to whom) in the light blue box before distributing it electronically or printing it.
4. **Promote the challenge** frequently and using multiple methods (e-mail, flyers, etc.). Send your first promotion at least 2 weeks prior to the start of the challenge. Customize the flyer to include sign up instructions, dates of the challenges and what the prizes are, if offering any.
5. **Send the weekly** motivational messages at the beginning of each week.
6. **Celebrate** everyone's success!

### Included in this toolkit:

- ✓ Flyer template
- ✓ 8-week tracker
- ✓ Weekly motivational messages
- ✓ Post-challenge survey

### Here are some additional resources:

- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), [Healthier Holidays](#)
- Excellus BCBS, nutrition content, [Health & Wellness: Nutrition](#)
- Excellus BCBS, physical activity content, [Health & Wellness: Fitness](#)
- Blue365, health and wellness discounts for Excellus BlueCross BlueShield members, [www.blue365deals.com](http://www.blue365deals.com)