

Put a stop to the battle of the holiday bulge

The holiday season is dominated by parties, family gatherings and festive foods. Overindulgence in rich foods and drink during the holiday season, compounded by cold weather that can make it difficult to exercise, often leads to weight gain by the end of the holiday season. But focusing on diet and exercise during the holiday season can help you avoid unwanted weight gain and provide more energy as the season progresses.

The following are some effective ways to sail through the season without gaining weight.

*** Don't scrimp and sacrifice all of the time.** The body is a powerful machine, but it does not always work the way that we want it to. According to nutritional experts, rather than metabolizing food on a daily basis, the body is geared to work over longer periods of time. That means you can balance out a high-calorie day by eating less food and/or lighter fare on the days before and after those days when you anticipate overeating.

*** Fill up before you go out.** If you are

worried about high-calorie foods and drinks that are often served at parties or holiday gatherings, eat before going to the event. Hunger may cause you to overeat and fill up on the wrong kinds of foods. Instead, eat a low-calorie snack that's high in protein and high in fiber before leaving the house. Eating beforehand may help you avoid the chips and dips.

*** Get plenty of sunshine when possible.** Lack of sunlight can attribute to winter blues, which may lead some people to rely on comfort foods. Such foods are typically rich in carbohydrates, fats and sugars. Spending time outdoors in the sun each day can improve your mood and get you off of the couch.

*** Fill up your plate with the right mix of foods.** Don't deny yourself when faced with a big holiday dinner. Rather, fill the plate with a good mix of foods. Devote more space to lean proteins, such as roasted turkey or chicken. Even lean ham is good. Devote much of the rest of your plate to roasted vegetables and whole grains. Take only small portions of high-fat foods like candied yams or bread

stuffings. You will still satisfy your craving, but you won't be overdoing it.

*** Skip the spirits for the most part.** Alcoholic beverages are loaded with empty calories. Many people would rather reserve bonus calories for a piece of pie or a rich brownie. Limit yourself to one drink per day.

*** Exercise every day.** It can be easy to push exercise aside when you're busy with holiday tasks. But soon your metabolism may slow down in response to your body's suddenly more sedentary lifestyle, leading to weight gain. Aim for some sort of daily exercise, whether you decide to park further away from stores at the mall or take the stairs instead of the escalator. Don't relegate exercise to a New Year's resolution. Inactivity will only mean you have to work harder in the future to shed those unwanted pounds you packed on during the holiday season.

Weight gain may be another part of the holiday season for many men and women. But individuals concerned about adding extra pounds can stop the pattern of gaining weight during the holiday season by making smart choices throughout the season.



Moderation is the best approach to diet during the holiday season.

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