

Weekly Wellness Tip

Preventing Holiday Weight Gain

The holiday eating season can wreak havoc on your diet. There are the traditional holiday meals, plus countless parties and events hosted by friends, co-workers, and relatives throughout the season. With a little careful thought and planning, you can avoid holiday weight gain. Following are some savvy strategies to get you started.

1. **Plan ahead.** Visualize what you will do at the event or party before you arrive. This will help you stick to a plan. Some ideas:
 - Have no more than one alcoholic beverage, followed by mineral water or club soda.
 - Pick out one favorite dessert and have a small piece.
 - Focus on enjoying good conversation, not on eating.
2. **Don't starve yourself.** Before an occasion involving food, eat a piece of fruit, a yogurt or other light snack before you go. This helps to curb hunger so you don't binge when you're there. If the event is in the evening, make sure you have a healthy breakfast and lunch.
3. **Bring your own.** Offer to bring an appetizer such as crudité and low-fat dip – or a healthy veggie dip to serve at the main meal. This way, you are assured there will be something healthy to eat. Others will appreciate your efforts.
4. **Buddy up.** Make a goal with a friend to maintain your weight during the holiday season. That way you are accountable to someone other than yourself.
5. **Exercise.** Sign up for a 5K fun, a fitness walk, or other fitness event. This will motivate you to focus on exercise and keep your body moving – a great way to prevent holiday weight gain. Besides burning extra calories, exercise can help you cope with stress and depression, which are common for many people during the holidays. Check with your doctor before you increase your activity level.
6. **Limit leftovers.** Make your home a safe haven. Send your guests home with the high-calorie leftovers if you have entertained. There are enough temptations outside the house. There is no need to make your home a difficult place to maintain control.
7. **Make smart substitutions.** Practice making your favorite dishes a little healthier.
 - Cut sugar by one third in the recipe.
 - Use trans-fat-free margarine instead of lard or butter.
 - Use 1% or evaporated skim milk instead of whole milk or cream.
8. **Choose beverages wisely.** Limit alcohol, which is high in calories.
 - Liquors, sweet wines, and sweet mixed drinks contain 150 to 450 calories per glass.
 - If you choose to drink, go for light wines and beers. Use non-alcoholic mixers such as water and diet soda or seltzer.
 - Watch out for calories in fruit punch, juice, and egg nog as well.
9. **Maintain perspective.** A single day of overeating won't make or break your eating plan. It takes days of constant overeating to gain weight. If you overindulge at a holiday meal, put it behind you. Return to your usual eating plan the next day, and leave your guilt behind.

Source: UnitedHealthcare

Maintain, Don't Gain Holiday Challenge

TeamHealth Wellness challenges all employees to maintain their weight during the holiday season. Go to www.teamhealth.com/wellness for further details.