



NEWS RELEASE

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Holiday Weight Gain

The Holiday Season is upon us and for many of us that means battling the dreaded holiday weight gain. Isn't it strange; you watch your weight during the weeks and months before the holidays, hoping to make a svelte and confident impression at parties and family gatherings? Then the holidays hit and we wind up 5- 10 pounds heavier by New Years. Well a new study suggests that the average American probably only gains about a pound or two during the winter holiday season-but this extra weight does add up through the years and may be a major contributor to obesity. So developing ways to avoid holiday weight gain may be extremely important for preventing obesity and the diseases associated with it.

The holidays should mean spending special time with your family and friends. But, more often than not, one aspect of the holidays' triumphs over all the rest - **food** and it's everywhere you go. You promise to go easy on the eggnog and say no to the party nuts, but then you find yourself lingering by the buffet table at parties and eating those chocolates you bought "in case company arrives unexpectedly." However, despite all the temptations, it is possible to make it through the holidays without the extra weight creeping up on you. You just need a game plan. Below are some tips to help you create a plan that will allow you to cut the calories but not the fun.

Think Quality not Quantity!

There are two kinds of food: the one worth all the calories and the other that's mostly there for decoration. When you have a craving for something decadent, go ahead and indulge yourself. But know the difference between something worth eating, like your sister's homemade chocolate Yule log cake, and something you could probably afford to pass up, like the dish of candy corn you just have to pillage every time you walk by. During the holidays, it seems like food is everywhere-- at the office, at your kids' school--but remember- that just because it's there doesn't mean you have to eat it. When you feel the urge to take a bite, take a minute and ask yourself just how worthwhile this particular little morsel is. If you're about to eat a fistful of candied nuts even though you really don't like candied nuts all that much, consider whether you might rather have a bite of your sister's cake later on. "When you're at a party, try to scope it out first and see what food is available," says Heidi Skolnik, M.S., a certified dietitian and nutritionist, and president of Nutrition Conditioning, Inc., in New York. "If you want to have the most fattening hors d'oeuvre, go ahead and have it, but then don't eat all the things you don't really like or care about."

Break the Holiday Food Frenzy Cycle.

If food is a major part of the holidays to you, there's a good chance that your kids will have the same attitude. Break this pattern early on by emphasizing the spiritual and social aspects of the holidays. Tell your children that time spent with family and friends is more important than having the opportunity to eat reindeer-shaped sugar cookies in school. Try to avoid giving food, especially sweets, as gifts (even stocking stuffers). Spend time with your children on non-food related activities such as reading or making homemade ornaments. You don't need to eliminate traditional cookie decorating just don't make it the only holiday activity you do. Create new traditions that focus on activity not eating.

Dress for Will Power!

It's a lot easier to pass up that second or third helping of pumpkin pie when your pants are feeling just a little tight around the waist. And everyone knows the feeling of leaving the house in a great-looking, form-fitting dress and blithely passing up fattening food because you want to stay this slim forever. These are good techniques and the holidays are a terrific time to implement them.

Entertain Healthy!

You don't have to serve a lot of high calorie foods if you're expecting company. Although breads, cookies and cakes are traditionally associated with holiday entertaining, you'd probably be surprised to see how much your guests appreciate some lighter fare. Try serving raw vegetables like carrots, broccoli and radishes (which come naturally in festive colors) with some tasty, low-fat dip. Instead of making punch, consider serving spiced tea or 100% juice spritzer that's lower in sugar and will give guests a welcome respite from rich, heavier drinks like eggnog. And be sure to have plenty of nonalcoholic drinks on hand, club soda or even ice water with a lemon slice is a great alternative. Of course, there's nothing wrong with offering cookies and other holiday goodies at a holiday party, but just don't feel compelled to make a high-calorie dish the main attraction. Explore the possibilities of lighter foods and you may not only save calories but preparation time. Happy Holidays!

Source: Dorothy E. Smith, Nutrition, Family and Consumer Sciences Advisor, UCCE in Amador, Calaveras and Tuolumne Counties.