

## Five Ways to Keep the Holiday Pounds Away

With the Holiday season fast approaching, you may have concerns about keeping those extra pounds at bay. It seems that even though the holidays themselves are only a few actual days, food is in abundance from Thanksgiving through New Year's, and temptation can be overwhelming. The following tips can help you survive the season with minimal damage.

### Keep the focus on family and friends

All too often, the emphasis is on the food rather than spending time with those we love. If you try to keep the focus on family and friends, this can help you shift mental gears and see the food as secondary. Yes, many people have food traditions that make the holidays special, but this is usually only a dish or two. However, when you think about it, is it really the food that makes the holiday, or the memories that the food invokes? Go ahead and make you favorite holiday dishes, but keep portions a reasonable size and focus on the time together. Also, try to avoid the feeling that you have to stuff yourself on your favorite holiday meals because you won't have the opportunity for another year. This type of "all or nothing" thinking can make you act in ways you might not otherwise.

### Eat Only Until You're Full

We've all heard this one before, but it bears repeating because it is so easy to overeat during the holidays. This includes not only the actual days, such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's, but also in between. This is a season of leftovers, and tasty ones at that, which can make overeating easy. Because the holidays involve a lot of parties, conversation, and occasional drinking, it can be very easy to get distracted by the mood and "forget" that you're on your third cream puff. Make a conscious effort to monitor your level of fullness and stop when you start feeling full. This can be easier said than done, but the extra effort can be worth it. Are the few moments of gratification worth the many hours afterward feeling miserable? In the moment, yes, which is why it takes a conscious effort to monitor intake.

### Choose Your Parties Wisely

While it's tempting to accept every invitation, consider the long-term effects. Do you really need to attend every party that comes your way? Not necessarily. Yes, parties are great fun, but they are also an area where temptation is great and willpower is low. As your holiday invitations come rolling in, consider the ones that are important. The office party, for example, may be one that you need to attend to stay in good graces with the boss; the party hosted by a co-worker that you barely know can probably be skipped. It can be hard enough avoiding all the goodies that people bring to the office and well-meaning friends give for gifts; adding extra social gatherings only makes it harder to say no or to limit your intake.

### Focus on Your Long Term Goals

When you think about it, the holiday season is relatively short, even though it feels like it's a few months straight of nothing but eating. However, if you break it down, there's a manageable lull between Thanksgiving and Christmas, and even between Christmas and New Years. As you navigate the actual holiday days and your chosen parties, keep your long-term goals at the forefront of your mind. Yes, the holiday treats are tasty and tempting. Think of the little ways you can enjoy the holidays and still keep the bigger picture in mind. As you reach for that second helping, ask yourself if the short-term satisfaction is worth the long-term costs.

### Keep your confidence up!

During the holiday season, with so much going on, it's very easy to throw your good eating habits and diet plans out the window for two months. Sweets and baked goods are constantly available, and it may just seem like too much to try to keep to your eating plans. However, throwing in the towel simply sets you up for failure. If you believe that it's pointless to try to eat well, then you probably will see those extra pounds creep on. Remind yourself that, with a little bit of planning, it is possible to make it through the season with minimal damage, but you do need a bit of confidence in yourself.

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