

Festive Season Health Tips

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Festive Food Survival Plan

We are fast approaching the season to be jolly, but with surveys showing people gain an average of two kilograms over the four-week Christmas period, it is also a challenging time for weight conscious individuals.

Here are some simple ways to help you cut calories without cutting back on fun during the festive season.

The plan

For some, lazing about and eating what ever they like over the Christmas holidays are simply important strategies to provide a rest from the regular healthy food and fitness routine that dominates their calendar.

However, for others the Christmas period can cause considerable physical and emotional trauma in terms of weight gain. Some people may choose to stay active and not worry about their diet, while others may take a break from physical activity but choose healthy foods.

There are two very important rules to help you survive the festive season:

1. Keep the real indulgent days to a minimum; say Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day. A two to four week feeding frenzy can take its toll on the waistline.
2. Don't try to lose weight over Christmas. Parties and celebrations can make slimming near impossible; so don't set yourself up for failure. Instead, keep your weight stable and get back into healthy eating after New Year.

Social success

Workplace celebrations and dinner parties seem to start earlier in December these days. Having a party plan that minimises calorie consumption can keep you focused on fitness further into the final month of the year.

Try the following:

* Don't arrive hungry. Have a small healthy snack before you go to parties to reduce the chance you'll overeat when you

get there.

- * Don't stockpile your plate with treats you may not need, but are likely to eat. Take one or two items and come back for more if you genuinely need to.
- * Adopt a pastry-free policy. By simply avoiding one of the most calorie laden party foods, you'll be ahead.
- * At the party, talk more, eat less and move away from the food table.
- * Go dancing after dinner to burn up some or all the excess energy.

Cutting calories

You don't have to make your entire Christmas dinner "fat-free", but introducing some tasty lower calorie food choices can make some real energy savings.

- * Try a range of lower fat snacks, including pretzels, rice crackers, fruit platters and 97% fat free biscuits. Dip these in ricotta cheese, mixed with sweet chilli sauce - it's a great low-fat dip!
- * Start the meal with soup. A hearty low-fat broth will help you feel full sooner.
- * To cut back on fat, remove the skin from the turkey and prepare large baked potatoes or chips. Chunky chips absorb less fat.
- * Prepare or purchase lots of fruit salad. There's nothing more refreshing than fresh, juicy fruit salad.
- * Choose low-cal drinks such as diet soft drinks, mineral water or plain chilled water.
- * Limit alcohol to particular times; say after 6pm as general rule.
- * Alternate alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks.

Avoiding overeating

By ignoring the body's normal fullness signals and overeating, it's possible to consume twice as many calories as on a usual day. Family get-togethers that become a constant feast from dawn to dusk, and beyond can be the most fattening days of the year.

Some tips:

- * If you are the food provider, plan your menus. Only buy and prepare as much food as you need.
- * Inform family the week before they arrive that there is no need to bring food. You have this covered.
- * Let people know you don't want food as gifts, especially chocolates, lollies or nuts.
- * Don't finish your plate. You may think leaving food on your plate is a waste, but it is a far better option than the calories ending up on your waist.
- * Keep between-meal snacks on small plates, and put away packets or jars of nuts and lollies so they are out of sight.
- * Use small wine glasses. A standard glass of wine is 125 millilitres, not 300 millilitres as some glasses can hold.
- * Only fill your own glass when it's empty, otherwise you can lose count of top-ups from others.

- * Place leftovers in the freezer immediately after serving, to make them harder to get hold of.
- * Better still; give leftovers to guests when they leave. You have to put yourself first.

Keep moving

If your diet takes a vacation at Christmas, try to keep your exercise routine on track. An after-meal walk, or backyard game will help digest your food and counteract the calories.

Other ideas include:

- * Plan a family day out at the park, zoo, or indoor game centre to get people moving again after Christmas Day.
- * Book an adventure holiday rather than a few lazy days poolside.
- * Buy the kids active presents. Examples include bicycles or sports gear.
- * Ask for an active present, such as a gym membership, rock climbing course or weekend at a health retreat.
- * Buy the Twister game, where players have to place their limbs on a mat of coloured dots and find themselves in all sorts of contorted positions. At least this will get people off the lounge, and into some fun.

New Year's Resolutions

If you overdo it these holidays, set a firm New Year date to get back on track (JUMP START re-opens on Monday 7th January). We can then reassess your goals for the year, forget about your indulgences and focus on the new you!