



Healthy for the Holidays

Holiday season is something most of us look forward to every year. It's a magical time that starts in November with Thanksgiving feasts, followed by holiday candy and cookies, and topped off with New Year's celebrations filled with desserts and cocktails. While many of us look forward to the feasts and festivities the season brings, some of us are already dreading the seemingly inevitable side-effect of the season: holiday weight gain!

Studies have shown that weight gain during the holiday season is significantly greater than at any other time of the year, and that holiday weight is usually not lost over the course of the year. While the average person only gains about a pound over the holidays, those who are already overweight tend to gain even more – as much as five pounds or more – during the holidays. No matter how many pounds you add, if you're not losing it after the holidays, the weight can really add up over time.

While it can be tough to make healthy choices with so many temptations throughout the holiday season, maintaining your weight doesn't mean you have to miss out on the holiday spirit. Here are a few tips to help:

- **Take it one day at a time** – Try to balance your calories over the course of a day or over a couple of days. If you know you'll consume extra calories at a dinner party, make adjustments earlier in the day. Focus on fruits and veggies, and add some lean protein and high-fiber grains to curb your appetite.
- **Step away from the gingerbread man** – At social gatherings, avoid planting yourself right in front of the food spread. Practice eating more slowly. Give your stomach about 20 minutes to digest before going back for seconds.
- **Don't be a couch potato** – Holiday season is also a time for added stress, emotional highs and lows, and colder weather that just slows you down. So make sure to commit to physical activity! This can include something as simple as walking 10,000 steps a day. If that sounds like a lot, don't worry, even 30 minutes of aerobic exercise or weight training 1 – 2 times per week can help prevent significant weight gain. It also helps relieve stress, keeping you in good spirits.
- **Get some shuteye** – Demands of the season and social events often make us change our sleep habits. We all need to maintain regular sleep patterns. Chronic sleep loss affects various aspects of our metabolism, which influences hunger and weight gain. Being tired also breaks down our will to resist temptations.
- **Start a new holiday tradition** – Rather than planning all your activities indoors, start a holiday tradition with outdoor activities—in colder climates, try ice skating, sledding or skiing. Or try something simple like, walking downtown or through your neighborhood instead of driving around to admire lighting displays and holiday decorations.
- **Lots of holiday cheer, not spirits** – For many of us, it just wouldn't be the holidays without a drink in hand, but try to limit your alcohol intake. Not only does alcohol have lots of empty calories, but it can lead to mindless munching on appetizers and treats. If you do drink, have a glass of water at the same time. It'll help fill you up and quench your thirst, so you won't immediately reach for another cocktail.

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• **Want more holiday eating tips?**
• It **IS** possible to enjoy some holiday treats while still making smart choices. The LiveLifeWell Registered Dietitian can help you figure out the right balance between naughty and nice.
• Visit **iLiveLifeWell.com** to learn more. Or call **847-937-5001** to schedule an appointment with Registered Dietitian Christy Burkard today!
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