May Your Holiday Season Be Light – How to Avoid Holiday Weight Gain

It’s that time of year when extra calories lurk around every corner – baked goods at the office, cocktails and snacks at holiday parties, chocolates in stockings and holiday dinners. A typical holiday dinner alone can carry a load of 3,000 calories. The good news is that it is possible to celebrate the holiday season without putting on a single pound.

Here are some helpful tips from the Calorie Control Council:

**Exercise:** There are a number of ways to be active including keeping track of steps per day with holiday shopping, ice skating, playing active video games, decorating, lawn work, and house cleaning. Exercise not only burns calories but also releases endorphins that help reduce stress and keep people in good spirits.

**Fuel Up before Heading Out:** Try to have a healthy snack before leaving the house – whether going shopping or to dinner. Never go anywhere famished – it can lead to overindulgence and diet derailing.

**Portion Control:** Save calories by choosing a smaller plate and taking a tablespoon or less of each holiday dish. Think of it like free samples – try one of each without going overboard. Desserts can even be served sample sized.

**Classics with Fewer Calories:** Find and fix lower-calorie versions of your favorite dishes, desserts and beverages. Create healthier versions of holiday favorites by using skim milk instead of whole milk, applesauce in place of oil, or a sugar substitute in place of the sugar in a recipe. To thicken a liquid without adding fat, use one of the following: flour, cornstarch, potato flakes, yogurt, non-fat evaporated milk. Just by using zero-calorie sweeteners and lower-calorie ingredients, you can enjoy delicious food without feeling guilty.

**Socialize Away from Food:** So often people find themselves socially snacking before and after meals. Try to strike up a conversation where food is out of sight. If there is a bountiful buffet, take a survey first. Skip foods that can be had “anytime” and opt for small portions of favorite holiday foods. Make the first trip to the buffet also the last.

**Lighten up Leftovers:** Skip the turkey sandwich with bread and gravy and instead go for turkey with leftover veggies. There are even salads, soups and other dishes that can be made with leftovers that are lighter on calories and help avoid holiday food burnout.

**The Buddy System:** Don’t wait until New Year’s to make resolutions with a buddy – find a friend or family member before the holidays to exercise with and compare healthy eating notes with every day. A little competition can help both stay focused on their goals.
Colder temperatures usher in the season of flu, colds, dry skin, seasonal depression and weight gain. Here are six ways to stay healthy even when it’s cold outside. Come spring, you’ll be glad you did.

**Be Accountable** - Schedule frequent workout sessions in your calendar to meet a friend. It can be for a yoga or spin class, or simply a walk or jog around the neighborhood. You are less inclined to bail if you are meeting someone.

**Keep Your Home Humidified** - You are more susceptible to colds when the air is dry. Use a humidifier or central humidifier to keep your home at around 45% relative humidity.

**Spend As Much Time Outside As You Can Stand** - Dress accordingly, and get outside as much as you can. Go sledding, skiing, snowshoeing, walk to work, or walk around the neighborhood. Staying active boosts your feel-good endorphins and improves your moods on those long winter days.

**Soak Up the Sun** - Sunshine provides you with doses of vitamin D to help combat the winter-time blues. Your body naturally makes vitamin D when your skin is exposed to sunlight, but this can be a challenge depending on your longitude. We recommend eating vitamin D-enriched foods to reach your daily value.

**Stay Hydrated** - Whether you are working out or playing outside, it’s important to drink water or a low-calorie beverage during all physical activity. It is common for people not to feel thirsty when they are cold, but you are exerting energy and sweating so keep hydrated.

**Ward Off Winter Munchies** - People tend to eat more in the cold weather months. Of course, this means an increase in calorie intake that can lead to weight gain. Substitute healthy snacks such as fruits and veggies in place of your high calorie, high sugar snacks to ward off the extra calories.

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