

Light Side

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TIPS TO AVOID HOLIDAY WEIGHT GAIN

It's that time of year when extra calories lurk around every corner -- frosted cookies at the office, eggnog at your neighbor's, and chocolates in your stocking. All these extras add up, and if you're like most Americans, you'll put on a pound or two by New Year's Day. So what's the harm in a little holiday weight gain, especially if it's just a pound? According to researchers at the National Institutes of Health, most Americans never lose the weight they gain during the winter holidays. The pounds add up year after year, making holiday weight gain an important factor in adult obesity. But you don't have to fall into this trap. It is possible to enjoy holiday goodies without putting on a single pound.

Never Arrive Hungry

Planning ahead can help you maintain discipline in the face of temptation. Don't go to a party when you're starving. Try to have a nutritious snack beforehand. If you do arrive hungry, drink some water to fill up before filling your plate.

Divert Your Attention

Many people forget that there's more to a holiday party than food. Don't view the party as just a food event. Enjoy your friends' company or dancing. Focus on something other than food. Chatting is a great diversion, whether you're at a small family dinner or a large party. Take your mind off of food and focus on the conversation.

Pace Yourself

Munch at a leisurely pace and remain in control. Thoroughly enjoy the foods you do choose to eat!

Outsmart the Buffet

When dinner is served buffet-style, use the smallest plate available and don't stack your food; limit your helpings to a single story.



Limit Alcohol

Avoid drinking too much alcohol at holiday parties. It's not just about calories but about control. If you drink a lot you, won't have as much control over what you eat. Sip water or club soda so you have something to carry like everyone else.

Be Choosy About Sweets

When it comes to dessert, be very selective. Limit your indulgences to small portions and only what is very sensual to you. If you are the type who can't stop at one bite, you're better off taking a small portion of a single dessert than piling your plate with several treats you plan to "try."

Bring Your Own Treats

Consider taking a low-calorie treat that you know you'll enjoy. Bringing your own dessert will provide you with an option.

Limit 'Tastes' While Cooking

If you do a lot of cooking during the holidays, crack down on all those "tastes." Instead of tasting mindlessly every few minutes, limit yourself to two small bites of each item pre- and post-seasoning. For tried-and-true recipes, dare yourself not to taste the dish at all until it is served.

Walk It Off

Create a new holiday tradition: a family walk. Besides burning some extra calories, this will get everyone away from the food for awhile.

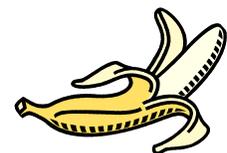
What's Food Got to Do With It?

If you are allergic to ragweed and your mouth or throat itches after you eat fresh fruits or vegetables during ragweed season, you may have pollen-food syndrome, also known as oral allergy syndrome (OAS), which results from a cross-reactivity between antibodies targeted toward pollen proteins with similar proteins found in the other parts of plants. Common symptoms are itchiness and mild swelling in the mouth and throat immediately after eating foods such as bananas, cucumbers, melons, zucchinis, sunflower seeds, chamomile tea and those containing Echinacea.

For people with birch tree allergy, the offending foods may be peaches, apples, pears, cherries, carrots, hazelnuts, kiwis and almonds.

Cooking the food may prevent the reaction. In some individuals, OAS can produce severe reactions. For more information visit

www.aaaai.org.



It's now officially the holiday shopping season -- as well as the most hectic time of the year -- and you may be finding it harder to stick to your regular exercise routine. The good news: You can still fit physical activity into your days as you do your shopping.

Move at the Mall!

How? Pick up the pace a bit during your mall walking and don't forget the benefit of those bags you are carrying (instant strength training!). If you don't get a prime parking space, think of it as a blessing in disguise. If you have a pedometer, take it along. Consider showing up before the stores open and walk around each floor at a quick clip. This way, you can get in your exercise and map out your shopping plan in advance too.



Crab-and-Corn Chowder

- 1 Tbsp light trans free margarine
- 1/2 cup chopped green onions
- 2 cups frozen corn kernels
- 1 cup diced red potato
- 2 cups skim milk
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 1 (16 oz) can reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 2 Tbsp cornstarch
- 1 (5 oz) can evaporated skim milk
- 1/2 cup chopped mushrooms
- 8 oz crabmeat
- Chopped fresh chives (optional)

Heat margarine in a large pot over medium heat. Add onions; sauté 2 minutes or until tender. Add corn and next 5 ingredients (corn through chicken broth); bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer 30 minutes or until potato is tender. Combine cornstarch and evaporated milk in a small bowl; stir with a whisk. Add cornstarch mixture to soup; simmer 5 minutes or until thick, stirring occasionally. Add mushrooms and crab and simmer 5 more minutes or until heated through. Ladle into soup bowls; sprinkle with chives, if desired.

6 servings (1 cup ea)

Calories: 180 Fat: 1.5g
Saturated fat: 0 Carbohydrates: 26g
Fiber: 2g Sodium: 320mg



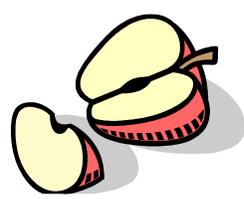
Apple Dessert Cups

- 4 cups diced apples
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1-1/2 Tbsp water
- 1 tsp fruit fresh (or lemon juice)
- 2 Tbsp water
- 1 Tbsp cornstarch
- cooking spray
- 15 wonton wrappers (small)
- 1/2 cup fat free whipped topping

In a medium saucepan, cook apples with sugar, water and fruit fresh for 5 minutes. Combine 2 Tbsp water and cornstarch; add to apples and cook until thickened; set aside. Spray a muffin pan with nonstick cooking spray. Press wonton wrappers into muffin cups and fill with cooked apples. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 minutes or until wrap is golden brown. Top with dollop of whipped topping and serve immediately.

15 servings

Calories: 60 Fat: 0 Carbohydrates: 15g
Fiber: 1g Sodium: 45mg




Lighten Up Iowa is slated to begin on January 10, 2007 and conclude on May 10.

Registration begins December 11, 2006.

Check out www.lightenupiowa.com for more information!



On the Light Side is written by Registered Dietitian Jenny Thompson.

Interested in Skiff Medical Center Wellness programs? Contact 791-4303.