

Features

Office of Medical Information
The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas

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CONTACT: Heidi Cannella
Office: 214/688-3404
Fax: 214/688-8252

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****Planning for the holidays
can prevent weight gain

DALLAS -- The holiday table may not be the only thing groaning from excess weight on Christmas Day.

"By indulging in the parade of goodies that starts at Thanksgiving and continues unabated until New Year's, the average person will gain 5 to 7 pounds," says Jo Ann Carson, director of the clinical nutrition program at Southwestern Allied Health Sciences School, part of The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas.

Those 5 to 7 pounds translate to 17,500 to 24,500 extra calories. How can that be? That little piece of fudge didn't have that many calories in it. The chart titled "Eating Your Way to the Next Dress Size" shows how easy it is to overindulge. One need only eat an extra 500 calories a day from Thanksgiving to New Year's to watch the scale creep up 5 pounds.

Carson doesn't recommend deprivation during the holidays; instead she suggests cutting out a few things one normally eats (preferably those with empty calories) to make room for that extra cookie or piece of fudge. (See the chart titled "The Daily Calorie Swap" for some ideas.)

Carson says it is even okay once in a while to save up your calories during the week in preparation for a weekend holiday party.

(More)

"To do that all the time, however, is not a good idea because you break that pattern of control," she says.

"A lot of people get into a pattern of eating carefully, and they begin losing weight," she explains. "Then something happens to change that pattern, something like the holidays. This may not be the best time to continue losing weight but rather a time to maintain your weight instead of gaining. It's still better than saying, 'I'm not going to do anything about it until Jan. 1, and then I'll go on a diet.'"

One stumbling block for many is associating the specialness of the holidays with having lots of sweets. "Try not to use the Christmas season as an excuse to ignore the rules you usually follow," Carson says.

For Carson and her family, not gaining weight during this season of celebration after celebration involves some time-tested family practices:

- * For holiday office parties or home buffets, put out a platter of fresh vegetables and a fat-free commercial salad dressing.

- * For a festive, non-alcoholic beverage, mix Treetop Apple-Cranberry Juice (which has no added sugar) half and half with sparkling water. "You get some nutrition from the juice and not too many calories," Carson says.

- * Cookie swaps can be used to circumvent the urge to overindulge. For instance, six cooks can make a batch of six dozen cookies each, and then everyone exchanges so you end up with six kinds of cookies.

"You can then freeze them and get them out for special occasions," Carson says. "You'll sample less if you only bake once instead of six times."

* "If you have a regular exercise program, don't abandon it," she warns. Reduced activity and extra calories could add up to more than 5 pounds. Look for family holiday activities that take you away from the table and TV: caroling, family sports or walks to enjoy the lights and decorations.

* "When you're preparing Christmas dinner, be sure to serve at least one thing that doesn't have too many calories, such as a bowl of fresh fruit without dressing or a fresh vegetable without sauce. That way if you want to eat a little extra, you'll have a low-calorie choice," she says.

* What about that office parade of food? "See if the office crowd would limit goodies to one day," Carson suggests. Or when it's your turn, bring a tray of fruit.

* When you receive gifts of food, Carson recommends freezing them to serve later.

Carson says that while she does make candy at Christmas, she only puts out small dishes of it at a time. "I think three pieces of fudge per person is reasonable," she laughs.

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RECIPES AVAILABLE: Broccoli mushroom quiche in rice cheese shell
Whole-wheat banana bread
Vegetable cheese spread
Strawberry smoothie
Banana brownies
Pumpkin mousse pie with apple-wheat crust
PHOTOS AVAILABLE: Broccoli mushroom quiche and strawberry smoothie

EATING YOUR WAY TO THE NEXT DRESS SIZE

Only 500 extra calories a day from Thanksgiving to New Year's will add 5 to 7 pounds to your weight. See how quickly 500 calories add up?

1 punch cup (4 ounces) of eggnog (alcoholic).....335 calories

1 ounce of peanut brittle.....123 calories

1 chocolate chip cookie.....46 calories

Total.....504 calories

1 piece of pecan pie.....334 calories

1 chocolate brownie.....130 calories

1 gingersnap.....34 calories

Total.....498 calories

THE DAILY CALORIE SWAP

OMITTING:

ALLOWS YOU TO HAVE:

French fries	1 cup of hot chocolate (218 calories.)
1 ounce of cheese	1-ounce piece of fudge with nuts (119 c.)
12-ounce soda	1 cup of caramel popcorn (134 c.)
1 dinner roll	8 to 12 mixed nuts (94 c.)
1 egg	1 glass of champagne (84 c.)
1 Tablespoon of butter	2 peanut-butter cookies (100 c.)
1 ounce of potato chips	1 slice of light fruitcake (156 c.)

SUBSTITUTING:

FOR:

ALLOWS YOU TO HAVE:

Lean ground beef	Regular ground beef	1 sugar cookie (89 c.)
2 glasses of skim milk	2 glasses of 2 percent milk	1 macaroon (67 c.)
1/2 breast of chicken	1 chicken drumstick and thigh	1 shortbread cookie (42 c.)
2 slices of diet bread	2 slices of regular bread	1 oatmeal cookie (62 c.)

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