

Eating Tips for a Lean Holiday Season

Consider these 10 tips for fully enjoying the holiday season without suffering the 7lbs average holiday weight gain!

- Move every day. Be physically active. Often, busy holiday schedules provide an excuse to get off your regular exercise routines. Physical activity, especially a variety of types, like aerobic, strength, stretching, and anaerobic options can help relieve stress, regulate appetite, and keep your metabolic furnace burning hot.
- Plan on NOT dieting after the New Year. Anticipation of food restriction sets you up for binge-type eating over the holidays (“after all, if I’m never going let myself eat this again after Jan. 1st, I might as well eat as much as possible now!”) Besides, restrictive diets don’t work in the long run anyways. They increase your loss of lean body mass vs. fat, slow down your metabolism, increase anxiety, depression, food preoccupation, and binge eating, and make weight re-gain more likely.
- Make a plan. Think about where you will be, who you will be with, what foods will be available, what foods are really special to you (that you really want to eat) vs. those that you could probably do without, what are your personal triggers to overeating and how can you minimize them. Once you’ve thought about all of these things, make a plan of action.
- Focus on weight maintenance vs. weight loss during the holidays. If you are currently overweight and want to lose weight, this is not the time to do it. Maintenance of your present weight is a big enough challenge during the holiday season. Don’t set yourself up for failure by making unrealistic goals for yourself.
- Eat a snack before going to holiday parties. It is not a good idea to arrive at a party famished. Not only are you more likely to overeat, but you are also less likely to resist the temptation of eating the higher sugar foods that cause much of that holiday weight gain.
- Take steps to avoid recreational eating. While some foods are more calorie-dense than others, no food will make you gain weight unless you eat too much of it. At parties and holiday dinners, we tend to eat (or keep eating) beyond our body’s physical hunger simply because food is there and eating is a “social thing.” To avoid recreational eating, consciously make one plate of the foods you really want. Eat it slowly--enjoying and savoring every tasty bite. Then, when you’re done, pop a mint or stick of gum in your mouth, get a tall glass of water and sip on it throughout the night, or position yourself away from the buffet table or food trays to keep yourself from overeating.

- Choose your beverages wisely. Alcohol and sodas are high in calories. Limit your intake of these and remember that proper hydration is essential to controlling your appetite. So don't forget your water bottle.
- Maintain perspective: Overeating one day won't make or break your eating plan and won't cause long term weight change; good or bad. It takes days and days of food choices change your body weight or composition. If you over-indulge at a holiday meal, put it behind you. Return to your usual eating plan the next day without guilt or despair.