

Moderation Key to Eliminating Holiday Weight Gain

By Voltaire Velarde, M.D., a board-certified internal medicine specialist affiliated with Sutter Solano Medical Center in Vallejo

There are many reasons we overeat during the holidays. With the stress of preparation, more social obligations, the financial pressures and time constraints, overeating and weight gain come easy.

With all the yummy food—the big family meals, the appetizers, and the eggnog—it is easy to throw caution to the wind and eat it all, relying on that old standby, the New Year's Resolution. You promise to lose all the holiday weight after the first of the year, of course. It doesn't have to be that way. How can you resist all the abundant goodies when the holidays roll around every year?

Here's some good news: You don't have to be totally good when it comes to making food choices during the holidays. That's right, you can treat yourself—just not too much.

There's no point in skipping good food, especially things you may only have the chance to eat once or twice a year. But, as I tell many of my patients, you must be guided by moderation. Many of us look forward to enjoying family recipes that are usually high in calories, so instead of passing altogether, take small servings.

Try to follow these suggestions for holiday eating done right:

- Never arrive at a party on an empty stomach. If you do that, you're almost guaranteed to overeat.
- Check out all the food choices available, sampling the "bad" ones in small portions and focusing on filling up on vegetables, fruit and lean meats like turkey.
- Don't feel that you must be eating all the time. If you find yourself merely putting food in your mouth to have something to do, put down the plate and walk away.
- Remember that alcoholic beverages contain calories, so while you may be proud of yourself for limiting your time at the buffet table, an evening of drinking can be just as bad for your waistline.

Don't Forget Exercise

In addition to monitoring your food intake, maintain your usual exercise routine. Try walking as an alternative to more rigorous activities. Northern Californians cannot use the "bad weather" excuse that those in other parts of the country may find convenient during the winter months.

Maintaining your usual exercise routine can be difficult, especially with time being a hot commodity during the holidays. It can be tempting to ditch your workouts as your days fill up with holiday preparations, parties and errands, but now more than ever, you need to stay active.

It's always important to maintain a healthy weight, since being overweight can predispose you to diabetes, heart and lung problems, joint issues, and more. You can't modify genetics, but you can exercise, eat well, and control risk factors like high blood pressure and high cholesterol—even while celebrating the holidays.

Need More Information?

If you're interested in learning more, call 707-428-2747 to request *How to Eat Healthy*, our free healthy eating guide. You can also research and learn about wellness, health issues, nutrition and more by visiting suttersolano.org/health/healthinfo.

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