



## 10 Tips to Avoid Holiday Weight Gain

### Here's how to celebrate without packing on the pounds

This time of year it's almost impossible to avoid parties with buffets of tasty food and drink. But all of that indulging can have a downside: holiday weight gain. The average person gains 1.7 pounds between Thanksgiving and New Year's according to a 2009 study. Considering the average adult adds on 2.2 pounds annually, that means more than 75 percent of that yearly weight gain occurs during the holidays. What's more, other research shows that extra weight put on now isn't lost during the following year. And a 2016 study found that holiday weight gain can start as early as October.

But there are ways to avoid this trap. Try these simple strategies and you can still eat, drink, and be merry without piling on the pounds.

#### 1. **Be Realistic**

In a holiday weight gain study, 15 percent of participants indicated they were trying to shed pounds between Thanksgiving and New Year's. But they ended up gaining the same amount of weight as others who were not trying to slim down. A better plan is to aim put off weight-loss efforts until after Jan. 1.

#### 2. **Hydrate**

While rushing around shopping and preparing for guests, it's easy to forget to drink plenty of water. Try to get in at least eight glasses per day. Your body easily confuses being hungry and being thirsty, so drinking water regularly will keep you from eating when what you really need is to drink.

#### 3. **Limit Alcohol Intake**

Alcohol calories add up fast. A 12-ounce beer has 140 calories and a 5-ounce glass of wine has 100. Plus, having too many drinks lowers your inhibitions, so when you imbibe you're likely to eat more. So stick to just a drink or two, or be the designated driver and avoid alcohol altogether.

#### 4. **Choose Your Glass Wisely**

A 2013 study found that people pour 12 percent more wine into wider glasses than into more narrow ones. (A standard 5-ounce pour might look like a puny amount in a large wine glass.) And sometimes people over pour white wines, such as chardonnay and pinot grigio, because the lack of contrast between the wine and the glass makes it more difficult to see when to stop.

#### 5. **Eat Slowly**

Some research shows that slow eaters tend to eat less food. Try this: Swallow each mouthful before taking the next bite, and chat with a table mate between forkfuls.

#### 6. **Beware the Buffet**

A bountiful buffet can be a challenge for many. "Think of a buffet as a menu in physical form," says Karen Collins, R.D., a nutrition adviser to the American Institute for Cancer Research in Washington, D.C. "You wouldn't order one of everything." Scan the choices before you pick up a plate. Or take smaller portions of a variety of dishes.

#### 7. **Outsmart the Food Pushers**

Pressure from hosts to eat beyond your fill is a common challenge at the holiday table. One way to keep from overstuffing yourself is to ask for seconds. Seriously! Just take a small portion says Brian Wansink, Ph.D. It's an easy way to flatter your host without expanding your waistline. Wansink has found that hosts recall who asked for second helpings but don't notice the serving size.

#### 8. **Be Selective, Not Rigid**

Don't declare all party food off-limits. It's a strategy that's bound to backfire. If you decide to deprive yourself of all treats, you may end up overindulging out of frustration and rebellion. Instead, be honest with yourself about which foods you're really looking forward to, and enjoy those in moderate amounts. At the same time, cut back on high-fat and calorie-bomb snacks and fillers you really can live without.

#### 9. **Don't Starve Yourself Before Holiday Events**

Fasting beforehand may seem like a smart way to "save up" for the calories you'll consume, but showing up to a party ravenous is only likely to cause you to eat too much as soon as you walk in the door. Instead, take the edge off your hunger before you leave home by eating small, low-calorie meals. A snack on the way to the party, such as a slice of cheese or some yogurt, can help keep you in control as well.

#### 10. **Stay Active**

Exercise is probably the first thing to fall off your to-do list during the holidays. But it's your best ally in the battle against holiday weight gain as well as holiday stress and depression. Don't worry if you can't maintain your regular workout routine because of travel or other commitments. Simply challenge yourself to add some physical activity to your day. After a big meal, keep the conversations going while taking a stroll. Or excuse yourself for a solo walk. Think of it as a perfect excuse to take a break from annoying relatives!

Source: Consumer Reports

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