



Holiday Maintenance - Fight Fat, Not Weight

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Diets don't work! But eating properly does. By making some dietary choices and life-style changes, you could be one of the lucky ones to avoid the average 5-7 pound holiday weight gain! The only guaranteed strategy for controlling your fat build-up over the holiday season is to eat nutritionally balanced, low-calorie, low-fat, low-sodium meals in combination with a moderate, regular exercise.

Sounds easy enough. But for some of us, the stress of added responsibility, demands and less time leads to anxiety, over eating, under resting and weight gain.

For many of us during the holiday season, we think that if we don't eat, or drastically reduce our calories, we'll be able to indulge a little more at the buffet table and maintain our weight. Not true. Skipping meals and diets low in caloric intake, actually put you in a state of starvation and malnutrition.

Within a few days of a diet less than 1,200 calories a day, your body has begun to devour its own muscle tissue, the very tissue that burns fat in the body, reducing its ability to fight injury or disease and, ironically, your bodies ability to burn fat! If you continue a low-calorie, or no meal regime, you'll lose weight not from fat loss but from muscle loss. And, with the loss of muscle, you'll soon regain the weight and your metabolism will have slowed down!

Eating smaller meals more often during a busy schedule can help. If you eat smaller meals, more often, you will find that your food is easier to digest, your blood-sugar levels will remain stable, hunger will be moderated, your energy levels will stay constant, your food will be metabolized and used more quickly after each meal and it will not be shunted along the metabolic pathway to fat storage. Smaller meals flow down the metabolic pipeline and don't back up! Don't avoid eating thinking it will help you, it actually does the opposite.

So, what can we do this holiday season that will easy and effective to help us maintain fitness and health? A lot. Remember, it is the amount of fat in our bodies and in our diet that is the culprit, not necessarily our weight in terms of pounds. Muscle weights more than fat - Muscle burns the fat in our bodies! Below are some simple holiday tips to help you fight fat.

- When eating out, choose dishes off of the side menu. You'll be able to create variety and eat smaller portions. Often you can order a baked potato, salad and vegetables!
- At parties, use a salad plate in place of a dinner plate. You'll eat less.
- Don't go to a party hungry. Especially if it is late in the evening.
- Avoid eating large amounts of food past six o'clock in the evening.
- Make time to exercise over the holidays. Schedule time to keep yourself active with aerobic exercise. If you can't get to your regular class, use a video at home to motivate you. Make a pact with a friend to help each other stay on schedule!
- Cut out and down on alcoholic consumption. Drink waters, juices, spritzers and beverages low in sugar.
- Stay away from luncheon meats such as sausage, hot dogs, salami and other types of foods high in saturated fats. Even hamburger can be high in fat. Choose cuts like round.
- If you're going to eat meats, cut the fat off and avoid eating the skin.

- Avoid fried finger foods, salty foods, canned foods and toppings and gravies.
- Wait at least 1/2 hour between helpings at a party.
- If you have a choice, choose poultry over red meats. Even the leanest-looking red meats are loaded with saturated fat. Chicken and turkey are very lean once you discard the fat just under the skin.
- Avoid nuts which are high in fat content.
- Choose from the high fiber and vegetable choices at the buffet table.
- If you use milk, switch to non-fat. You can wean yourself into this by mixing whole milk with low-fat, then drink low-fat alone, next mix low-fat with non-fat and finally drink non-fat alone.
- Stay away from high fat cheeses. Almost all cheese is very high in fat except for cottage cheese, ricotta, Farmers and mozzarella made with part skim milk.
- Stay away from creams and ice-cream. Plain low-fat yogurt is an excellent substitute for sour cream. Sorbet and sherbet are both much lower in fat than ice-cream.
- Choose fruit as a low sugar alternative for dessert.
- Avoid all processed foods, pickles, ham, bacon, salty crackers and nuts.
- Avoid foods made with lots of eggs such as souffles, cakes, custard and cookies.
- Replace main course dishes with those that have no food of animal origin such as rice and pasta.
- If you are preparing holiday meals, find substitutes for high fat ingredients. For instance, replace two egg whites for one egg yoke. Many cook books on the market can be of great help to you in finding alternatives. Below are a few choices.

1. The Pritikin Program for Diet and Exercise by Pritikin.
2. The New American Diet System by Sonja L. Connor, M.S. R.D. and William E. Connor, M.D.
3. The Fifteen Minute Vegetarian Gourmet by Paulette Mitchell.
4. Thai Vegetarian Cooking by Vatcharin Bhumichitr.
5. Chicken Dinners by Bodger.
6. The Art of Low-Calorie Cooking by Schneider,
7. The Fit or Fat Target Diet by Covert Bailey.
8. Changes by Rhonda Gates.