



Don't grow Santa's belly during holidays

I really do not want to gain weight over the holidays this year. Any good tips?

These tips are good year-round, but especially at this time of year. A study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 2000 showed that about half the average 1.4-pound weight gain over the course of a year occurs between Thanksgiving and New Year's. In that study, fewer than 10 percent participants gained five or more pounds during the holidays, but even those who gained less than a pound had difficulty shedding it afterwards.

How can you prevent weight gain in the first place? It's no secret: Just burn as many calories as you consume. Of course, that's harder at this time of year than almost any other. So, here's the skinny on keeping you on the straight and narrow:

- Weigh yourself every week. Don't obsess — an extra pound one day can disappear the next. But it's a good idea to keep track. If you see the scale inch up, you'll be less likely to have that second (or third?) treat.

- Do what you can to increase your metabolism. Walk a little faster at the mall, through a parking lot or down the grocery aisle. Put that holiday movie on "pause" a few times so you can make a quick trip up or downstairs or refill your glass of ice water. Do some deep breathing and stretches periodically during any period of sedentary activity.

- Be sensible when it comes to portion sizes, and balance your daily consumption. For example, you only need five to seven ounces from the meat and beans food group each day, depending on your age, sex and activity level. In the grains group, you should consume between five and 10 ounces, and half should be whole grains. At the same time, you should be eating (even during the holidays) 1.5 to 2.5 cups of fruit and two to four cups of vegetables each day. For adults, recommended calorie intake per day to maintain your weight ranges from 1,600 to 3,000. You can estimate your individual calorie needs at <http://mypyramid.gov>. Keep all of that in mind as you make choices when you're eating out, hosting a party or enjoying a holiday treat.

- Don't skip meals in anticipation of a big holiday dinner or party. That can lead to disaster. Remember, balance is key.

- If you drink, watch the alcohol. Not only does it offer very little nutritional benefit for the number of calories it contains, it also can weaken your resolve to get through the holidays without weight gain.

- Keep a food and exercise diary. If you know you will write it down, you're more apt to be "good."

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



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By Martha Filipic
(614) 292-9833
filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu

Editor:

This column was reviewed by Jaime Foster, registered dietitian and program specialist for Ohio State University Extension in the Department of Human Nutrition, College of Education and Human Ecology.

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Section of Communications and Technology News and Media Relations
2021 Coffey Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1044
(614) 292-2011

208 Research Services Building
1680 Madison Ave.
Wooster, OH 44691-4096
(330) 263-3780

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