

Top 10 ways to avoid gaining holiday weight

URBANA, Ill. – If you think that a five-pound weight gain is inevitable during the holiday season, you’re wrong. It’s a *myth*, said Mary Liz Wright, a University of Illinois Extension nutrition and wellness educator.

“Actually, according to the National Institute of Health, <http://www.nichd.nih.gov>, the average American gains just under one pound between Thanksgiving and Christmas,” Wright said.

That’s the good news. The bad news is that most of us never lose that one pound, she said, and if we are overweight, we are more likely to gain five or more pounds during the holiday season.

“What causes this weight gain, you ask? Is it the never-ending parade of goodies brought by well-intentioned co-workers? Is it the lack of sleep caused by too many late-night parties or the time you spend putting some-assembly-required gifts together?” Wright asked.

All of those can be a factor, but the biggest culprit may be our tendency to avoid the gym when we need it the most. A hectic holiday schedule can wreak havoc on a would-be exerciser with the best possible intentions. So what’s a person to do?

Wright offers her top 10 ways of avoiding holiday weight gain:

1. Drink plenty of water. It will fill you up and keep you hydrated and energized.
2. Fill half your plate with vegetables, even at holiday gatherings.
3. Send leftovers home with your guests. Better yet, avoid leftovers altogether by preparing only what your guests will eat at one sitting.
4. Eat breakfast every day to maintain energy levels. It will help you avoid temptation by keeping your metabolism revved up.
5. Eat a healthy snack just before you leave for a party. You’ll avoid the urge to overeat at the buffet table when you arrive at the party ravenous.

6. Try to cut 100 calories from each festive meal—skip the bread, skip the butter, or only choose a small serving of the higher-calorie selections.
7. Be conscious of the “Oh, well” trap. Don’t overeat because you’ve already had a cookie at work or because you’re going on a diet after the holidays.
8. Watch your alcohol consumption. Even one drink can lower your resistance to tempting foods.
9. Find time to exercise. Don’t skip your workout, and if you can, add 15 minutes on days when you know you’ll be indulging in holiday goodies.
10. Give yourself a break. Have a cookie—but don’t have 12!

Extension publications *Altering Recipes* (NCR473) and *Adjusting Recipes to Meet Dietary Guidelines* (University of Nebraska Extension EC 442) offer these helpful hints when baking for the holidays.

- Reduce fat by doing the following:
 - For every tablespoon of solid fat, use $\frac{3}{4}$ tablespoon liquid oil.
 - Replace half the fat in a recipe with unsweetened applesauce or prune puree or plain low-fat yogurt.
- Reduce sugar by:
 - Cut sugar by one-fourth to one-third.
 - Use a heat-stable sugar substitute.
- Increase whole grain:
 - Replace one-third of the flour in a recipe with whole-grain flour.
 - Replace salt with herbs or spices.

Finally, Wright offers this healthier version of a classic recipe, gleaned from the American Diabetes Association.

Gingerbread

Servings: 18

Serving size: 1 slice

Ingredients

2 cups unsweetened applesauce
3/4 cup molasses
1/3 cup vegetable oil
3 eggs
3 cups all-purpose flour
1 1/3 cups Splenda® no-calorie sweetener, granulated
2 teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons ground ginger
1-1/2 teaspoons cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground cloves

Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray a Bundt pan with butter-flavored cooking spray. Set aside.
2. Pour applesauce, molasses, and vegetable oil into a large mixing bowl. Add eggs. Stir well.
3. Blend remaining dry ingredients in a separate bowl. Mix well.
4. Add dry ingredients to the applesauce mixture. Stir well.
5. Pour cake batter into prepared pan. Bake in preheated 350°F oven 50 to 60 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Remove from oven. Cool cake in pan on a wire rack approximately 20 minutes. Invert cake onto serving plate. Serve warm or cool.

Nutritional Information (per serving)

Calories: 180

Calories from fat: 45

Total fat: 5g

Saturated fat: 1g

Cholesterol: 35 mg

Sodium: 240 mg

Total carbohydrate: 30 g

Dietary fiber: 1g

CAMPUS WELLBEING SERVICES

humanresources.illinois.edu/campus-wellbeing-services

Sugar: 13 g

Protein: 3 g

“Take these tips to heart and your heart will be merry but your tummy a little less jiggy after the holidays this year,” Wright said.

News Source:

Mary Liz Wright, 217-826-5422

News Writer:

Phyllis Picklesimer, 217-244-2827