

Avoid Holiday Weight Gain!

By

Carolyn Hendry Wyatt, Extension Agent III, Family & Consumer Science/4-H

The average American gains one to two pounds during the holiday season. The issue isn't just the weight gain, but the fact that this weight is never lost. Americans gain weight each holiday season, maintain that weight throughout the year, and then put on more pounds the next holiday season. Gain two pounds every winter, and that equals 20 pounds in ten years! Of course, avoiding holiday weight gain is often easier said than done, right?

How can we stop this cycle? The first step is to be realistic. It's not likely that you will lose a large amount of weight over the holidays. So, making drastic calorie cuts is not a realistic option. Instead, set a personal goal of maintaining your current weight through the end of the year. Make it your personal mission not to gain excess pounds. The CEO and Founder of Jazzercise, Judi Sheppard Missett, offers five simple questions to ask yourself this holiday season to keep weight gain at bay. Here they are:

- 1. What is my plan?** Before the holidays even begin, make a plan. Mark your calendar with pre-set appointments for exercising, even if it is just walking for 30 minutes. Decide on your menus ahead of time, and head to the produce section of your grocery store to stock-up on fruits and leafy greens.
- 2. How can I get my co-workers to help out?** Office settings can be a catastrophe for nutritional eating during the holidays. So, talk to your co-workers ahead of time. Ask them to agree that fattening desserts and sugary treats will be kept in one section of the office only. That way, you can easily avoid the route of temptation. Maybe others in the office are struggling with maintaining their weight, also, and would welcome this strategy.
- 3. Why am I attending this party?** When you think about it, you generally don't attend a party strictly for the food. You're there to spend time with your friends and family. So, focus on socializing. There's no reason to make three trips to the buffet when you're engrossed in calorie-free conversation!
- 4. Am I getting my five-a-day?** Eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables everyday. The fiber in these low-calorie foods will give your stomach a full sensation, so you're less likely to chow-down on cakes, candies, or crackers.
- 5. What are my favorite indulgences?** It's okay to have a tasty treat now and then. If you deprive yourself of everything, you're more likely to binge in a moment of weakness. So, pick your favorites, and allow yourself those indulgences this holiday season. Don't waste calories on a vending machine bag of chips when what you're really craving is mom's homemade cherry pie!

I hope these few short tips will cause you to stop and think about successfully managing your weight over the holidays during November and December. Hopefully, you will prevent that average two-pound per year weight gain during these months of the heaviest eating times of the year! (Source: www.Jazzercise.com.)