

HOLIDAY HEALTH

Well, it's that time a year again..... What exactly is "that time" referring to? Is it the time we get to spend with family? The time we acknowledge our blessings? The time to reflect on the past year and make resolutions for the coming year? These declarations are what we should be pondering, but in reality, for many, they aren't. For many of us "this time of year" represents a struggle. A struggle to enjoy the time without indulging too much or "undoing" everything we tried so hard to do throughout the year. I am referring to the dreaded weight gain.

The holidays are a time to celebrate family and friends. To take a moment in our busy lives to really focus on what is important. And often with these celebrations comes mounds of traditional foods and drink we don't usually have throughout the year. Many feel that it is a "get out of diet for free card" for the day. Others spend the whole day miserable because the temptation is too great and it makes them feel undisciplined or weak. Our lives are centered around food. Very often seen as a reward. We need to change that mind set. Change the mind and you will change the behavior.

The first thing I recommend is bring an item you know you can go to if everything else is too heavy. Your own personal backup. Do not skip breakfast in order to "prepare" for all the goodies that will be present. This WILL backfire. Second, be realistic with yourself. If your mom is making your favorite dish which is loaded with heavy sauces or cream, know that you will partake, and enjoy it! The key is to take smaller portions. Have all your favorites but within moderation. Wait, give your brain time to register the calories and then see if you really are hungry for more. Very often we can be fooled by all the smells and presentations of food to think we are hungrier than we really are. Remove yourself from the food area and take note as to how you really feel. Loading up on veggies and dip may help curb your appetite a little too.

There are many ways to reduce the "damage" a heavy meal can cause. Chris is posting an excellent slide show with very helpful suggestions ([see show](#)). My advice would be to choose one or two. Do not try to "diet" during the holidays this will backfire. Just be smart. You work very hard on staying healthy. Choose your calories wisely. If there is a favorite dish then that is what you use your calories for. Do not indulge in heavier items just because they are there and you don't really care for them. Eat slowly, enjoying the food, the company.

Finally, I'd like to leave you with this thought. If you stay healthy all year, your health is a way of life and not an "on again off again" scenario, then celebrating a few times a year with foods you don't normally have should NOT jeopardize your health and weight in any way. It is all about living in the moment and not moments of living. So enjoy your holidays and time with family and friends, that is where our focus should be.....Happy Healthy Holidays! Jen