



## Maintaining a Healthy Weight during The Holidays

By Daniel Casciato

With a tremendous emphasis on food, it's no wonder many of us overindulge during the holidays.

According to the National Institute of Health (NIH), between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day, actual holiday weight gain is about one pound. "This may seem slight but the concern is that this weight is gained and then never lost during the rest of the year," says Paula Martin, a registered dietitian at Carnegie Mellon University.

The North Hills resident says that if you add holiday gains to previous gains, you may see a 1-5 pound increase every year. "This is one of the many reasons why we have weight maintenance problems in our population," she says. "The good news is that people who have remained physically active were able to prevent this gain." According to Martin, there are several things you can do to remain fit and maintain a healthy diet this holiday season.

### Stay Active

"Stick to your regular physical activity as much as possible," advises Martin. Schedule in your workouts like you normally would. She recommends 30 minutes on most days of the week.

"If you need to cut back, also cut back on sedentary activities, like family TV night," she says. "Add in a family walk, bike ride, skate night, backyard leaf raking or even snow-ball fights. All these activities will also help reduce holiday stress."

### Plan Ahead

If you're attending a party, plan ahead. "If you are asked to bring a dish, make it a low calorie option such as fruit kabobs, shrimp cocktail or mixed vegetables," says Martin.

She recommends balancing high calorie foods with lower calorie foods. "Before the plate is piled high, make a decision about what you really like and want to include on your plate and what you should take smaller portions of," says Martin. She also advises that you eat in another room so you can add distance from yourself and the food.

### Think of Others

You're not the only one trying to control your weight. "One problem I notice is that the workplace becomes a dumping ground for all the holiday food gifts that we do not want to keep in our own homes," says Martin. "Try not to sabotage your workplace and co-workers. Put those cookies in the deep-freezer to save for a later date."

Martin suggests that you send your business partners, clients or employees fruit baskets, charitable donations in their name or send a massage therapist to do a seated three-minute neck massage instead of the traditional plate of cookies, popcorn

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tins or candy as thank-you gifts.

### Make Baking Substitutions

If you're doing any cooking or baking, experiment with recipe modification before you plan to serve the dishes. The American Dietetic Association recommends that you substitute non-fat or reduced-fat dairy products in the recipes and that you use plain non-fat yogurt instead of sour cream for dips. Substitute applesauce to get half the fat in recipes that call for oil, margarine or butter in dessert breads, brownies and muffins.

### Focus on Weight Maintenance

No matter how hard we try, we're still going to skip a workout or overeat at some point during the holidays. "Your goal should be weight maintenance," says Martin. "Maintain the weight you've already lost. You don't have to skip and sacrifice favorite holiday meals or treats. Just remember to watch portion sizes."

And if you feel like you overdid it the night before, make an extra effort the next day to add in some physical activity and watch food portions. "Don't wait to start your New Year's resolution of losing weight on January 2nd," Martin adds. "Start now so you will have a plan already in place to go back to."

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