



## **Beating the Battle of the Holiday Bulge**

### **Introduction**

The holidays are upon us, bringing with them an assortment of holiday treats. Many of these holiday goodies pose a direct challenge to the healthy eating plan that you have tried to adhere to for the last eleven months. Whether you are at home, a friend's house or at the office holiday party, the temptation to overeat is lurking at nearly every table you pass.

It is commonly believed that the average American will gain five to seven pounds during the holidays. According to recent research by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), however, the average weight gain is approximately one pound. While this may strike some as being good news, this doesn't mean that you can eat that pecan pie all by yourself. The problem with even minimal weight gain is that many people are not shedding this excess weight after the holidays, and those extra pounds are adding up over time.

### **Objectives**

Participants will learn:

- Ways to trim the fat and calories from holiday foods.
- Tips for avoiding holiday weight gain.
- Tips for keeping fit during the holidays.

### **Icebreaker**

*Have participants discuss what a normal holiday is like for their family.*

For example: We eat Thanksgiving lunch at 12:00pm and then we watch football on television for the rest of the afternoon while snacking on leftovers. We usually eat dinner on Thanksgiving at 6:00pm; this usually consists of turkey sandwiches and whatever else is leftover from lunch.

*Next, discuss ways they could make changes (if necessary) to reduce their fat and calorie intake and to increase their activity level during the holiday season.*

### **Healthy Eating During the Holidays**

Many traditional holiday foods are loaded with fat and calories; however, this doesn't mean that all of your favorite foods are off limits. Instead, look for ways to make them healthier by trimming some of their fat and calories.

Here are some simple ways to trim calories and fat from holiday foods:

- Cut the fat and calories in gravy by passing it through a skimmer before serving.
- Eat skinless white-meat turkey instead of dark meat.
- Cook the stuffing outside the turkey. It contains fewer calories and fat than stuffing cooked inside the turkey and reduces the risk of bacteria contamination.
- Serve some items that are very low in calories and fat, such as a fresh fruit salad or steamed vegetables topped with lemon juice and herbs.
- Substitute baked potatoes instead of candied yams.

- Top vegetables with light margarine or reduced-fat sour cream instead of butter.
- Serve an apple pie topped with fat free frozen yogurt instead of pecan pie.

### **Other Tips for Beating the Battle of the Holiday Bulge**

In addition to altering your cooking methods, there are other ways that you can avoid packing on those holiday pounds. Before you head to your next party, keep these recommendations in mind:

#### Choose Your Parties and Dinners Wisely

If you have been invited to several holiday events, do you really need to attend them all? The more parties you attend, the more likely you will be to overindulge. If you do decide to attend them all, never arrive on an empty stomach. Eat a small salad or low-fat snack before leaving. This will help you from overeating at the buffet table once you are at the party.

#### Avoid Mindless Snacking

When you are at a party, don't stand near the food tables. If you are carrying on a conversation with another person, go sit down somewhere instead of hovering over the buffet. This will help prevent you from unconsciously nibbling on extra food.

#### Focus on Your Family and Friends

While food is certainly a major component in the joys of the holidays, it is important to not let it be the only focus. Concentrate instead on your family and friends and celebrate the simple joy of being together.

#### Limit the Amount of Alcohol Consumed

If you decide to partake of alcohol during the holidays, be sure to never drink on an empty stomach. Always have food with your drink. Avoid drinking in excess as well, as alcohol has a tendency to loosen inhibitions, which may encourage you to overeat.

#### Maintain Your Exercise Routine

Instead of collapsing on the sofa after returning home from a party, hit the exercise bike for half an hour. Exercise should be a major part of your lifestyle throughout the year, and the holidays should be no different. A workout is the perfect way for you to unwind from the stresses of battling in the shopping aisles at the mall. Most importantly, though, it is a great way to burn off those extra calories!

### **Tips for Keeping Fit During the Holidays**

Many of us find it very difficult to exercise regularly and eat nutritiously during the weeks between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. Holiday feasting and additional demands on an already-busy schedule can quickly add up to increased stress, decreased energy and weight gain.

Here are some tips for keeping fit during the holidays:

- Don't overbook yourself. Schedule time in your daily planner for physical activity along with business engagements, social celebrations and relaxation.
- Maintain a gentle discipline. Don't mentally berate yourself if you happen to miss a workout. Don't blow it off, either. Instead of losing valuable workout time, be flexible by exercising at a different time of day.

- Don't surrender to the seasonal madness. Adapt to a hectic holiday schedule. If you can't make it to the fitness facility or your favorite activity class, purchase a piece of home equipment (even a jump rope will do) or an exercise video.

### **Summary**

The holidays are not an ideal time to try to start a diet. Rather, your goal should be to maintain your weight during this time frame. If you should decide to indulge in a piece of chocolate fudge or some other decadent dessert, don't berate yourself. Simply cut back on calories elsewhere during the rest of the day or spend a few extra minutes on the treadmill during your workout routine.

**Handout 1: How to Exercise Away Those Holiday Treats**

**Handout 2: Let's Get Moving**

**Recipe 1: Golden Apples and Yams**

**Recipe 2: Four Fruit Salad**

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