



Healthy Happy Christmas

When it comes to Christmas, most of us expect to gain at least a few extra pounds and we know we'll shed them in the New Year, but for those seriously trying to lose weight Christmas can be a trying time. Every party leads you into temptation and even at home there are plenty of pitfalls. On Christmas day people can eat and drink their way through up to 6000 calories!! That's up to three times what we need in an average day so we've put together some tips to help you through the festive season.

Don't starve yourself

Over Christmas it's better to aim to keep weight steady than to try to actively lose it. There is nothing like avoiding every bit of party food to bring on the urge to give up the whole diet and splurge. Have a little of what you fancy. Pick one or two parties over Christmas where you can indulge - but keep it to just one or two - and remember Christmas day counts as one!

Choose wisely

Between work and family many of us have more than one party to go to and at this time of year the food tends towards the high fat and stodgy or the sugary and sweet. Usually there is a buffet or savoury snacks. Start by having some of the lower calorie options - salads, fruit and bread before you head for the sausage rolls and mince pies. This will take the edge off your appetite and means you will be able to stop at one or two cocktail sausages instead of having seven or eight.

Be careful what you buy

Christmas is a great excuse to fill up the shopping trolley with tins of biscuits and boxes of sweets but who is going to end up eating them? If you are only having guests over for one day at Christmas, buy just what you need for that day. Very few people arrive unannounced these days so you don't need to stockpile goodies 'just in case'.

Healthier Nibbles

- Satsumas and other seasonal fruits such as mango
- Handful of unsalted nuts, if you can get them chestnuts are the only low fat nut
- Reduced fat crisps, popcorn or pretzels
- Dried fruit such as dates, figs or apricots
- Bread sticks with tomato salsa or low fat yoghurt dips

Take some time out

There is nothing like getting stressed to send many of us to the biscuit tin. Christmas can be pretty hectic - between shopping, family and trying to get everything organised. Remember to set some time aside to relax - have a long bath or even just take time out from the shopping for a cup of coffee and a magazine. If you do feel it all getting to you, try some ways to de-stress that don't involve eating - try heading out for a walk or meeting up with friends.

Plan Ahead

Most of us are very busy at this time of year and often go for take-aways and junk food instead of a proper meal in the evening. Having some standbys in the house can help. Beans on toast is a quick, nutritious meal and you can try stocking the freezer with cartons of fresh soups which can be quickly reheated when you need them. If you are cooking dishes such as stews or casseroles, make



some extra and freeze it - then you don't have to worry about cooking when you come in from a busy day.

Christmas Day

Even on Christmas day breakfast is the most important meal of the day....

- Make your breakfast cereal festive and an extra bit special – try adding some fruit such as fresh kiwi, raspberries or blackberries, try dried figs or dates for a festive twist.
- Fresh, frozen and dried fruits all add to your 5 a day target.
- Any left over fruit could be served with some pancakes or whizzed up to make a delicious and nutritious smoothie.

Dinner is served.....

- • For starters try melon and other fresh fruits or smoked salmon.
- A delicious homemade soup can be a warming low calorie starter, try adding some seasonal butternut squash. Top with low fat crème fraiche and some fresh parsley rather than cream
- • Turkey meat is fine however avoid the skin as this is high in fat
- • When roasting potatoes leave them whole rather than cutting them small as the smaller they are the more fat they will absorb. Roast separately from the turkey to cut out the animal fat
- • Fill up on plenty of vegetables but avoid adding butter or rich sauces. Steam your vegetables rather than boil to hold onto those valuable vitamins and minerals
- • Gravy is a must for turkey but allow the juices to settle so you can skim off all fat before making.
- • Use low fat custard or crème fraiche instead of cream or brandy butter with pudding.
- Try a fruit compote by stewing your favourite berries with plums and apples with a pinch of cinnamon.
- When you feel full stop eating!
- • For snacks choose plain popcorn. Pretzels, bread sticks and raw vegetables to dip in salsa

Christmas Cheer

We do more drinking at Christmas than at any other time of the year and alcohol is a big problem if trying to keep your weight stable. Not only does it contain calories itself (one pint of beer has around 200 calories) it also leads to low blood sugar, which makes you feel hungrier. Not to mention the fact that after a few drinks you often don't care what you eat! Have a glass of water for every second drink, this will not only reduce the calories, but will also help the hangover. Mixing wine with mineral water is another way to cut back on calories. If you have a lot of parties to go to try not to drink at all of them - and bringing the car with you has the added benefit of not having to queue for taxis.

Hangovers

Most of us head straight for the traditional fry the morning-after-the-night-before. Better hangover cures are fruit juices and fruit smoothies and getting out into the fresh air. Drinking 1-2 pints of water before you go to bed is one of the best ways of avoiding hangovers.



Take your time when eating

Slow down when you eat - especially at this time of year. You usually eat more when you eat quickly and slowing down will help you to reduce the amount you take in. Look for the slowest eater in the group and pace yourself to them. You should aim to be among the last finished, not the first and remember you don't have to finish everything on your plate.

Eating Out over Christmas

Christmas is a time when we are attending a whirlwind of parties and eating out nearly every week. Here are some top tips to make your eating out as healthy as possible....more tips can be found on our **Surviving the Party Season Fact Sheet** which you can access from our homepage

Try these top ten tips!

1. Enjoy your meal and relax when eating out.
2. Try a fruit, vegetable or salad based starter – both light and filling.
3. Choose grilled or oven-baked lean meat, chicken or fish dishes as opposed to fried.
4. Ask if the sauce/dressing of your dish can be served on the side – you can control how much you wish to use. Look for sauces without added cream or butter. Try tomato or fruit based sauces instead.
5. Try to avoid deep-fried side orders such as chips, potato wedges or garlic mushrooms. Choose potatoes and vegetables served without butter or oil.
6. If getting a made-to-order sandwich, choose either butter or mayonnaise, not both. Ask for plenty of salad vegetables such as tomato, cucumber and lettuce.
7. Try to include wholegrain and wholemeal varieties of bread more often and ask for low-fat spread.
8. At lunchtime go for starter size dishes if you will be eating again later. Choose fruit more often than foods such as crisps, chocolate or cake.
9. Go for a fruit-based dessert or share richer desserts with a friend.
10. Drink plenty of water with your meal. It will help fill you up and reduce your alcohol intake.

Entertaining at home

Appetizers don't always have to be crisps and sausage rolls. Raw vegetables like carrots, celery and cauliflower chopped and served with dips such as salsa are tasty and low in calories, as are olives with thin slices of French bread. Have fruit based desserts such as apple crumble and have some frozen yoghurt available as well as ice cream to go with it. If you are having traditional desserts like Christmas pudding go for custard made with low fat milk rather than cream. You are unlikely to be the only person watching your weight - your friends may thank you for thinking of lower calorie options.

Get some exercise

Most of us have a few days off over Christmas, which makes it a great time to get some exercise. Doing some extra walking or sessions at the gym will help to balance out the extra food you're eating. Walking in the fresh air is also one of the best hangover cures - so now you have two reasons to get going.

If you want more information on nutrition issues check out our huge list of fact sheets on the homepage.



If you want to see a dietitian, check out the “Find a Dietitian” Section on our homepage