

Tips to Avoid Weight Gain During the Holidays

Between mid-November and mid-January, adults in Western societies gain an average of 1-2 pounds. The trouble is most people don't lose this extra baggage.

1. **Be active with family and friends.** Doing some type of physical activity may prove beneficial for weight control. Even something as simple as a family walk can get your mind off food and allow you to bond with your loved ones.
2. **Snack wisely.** Be mindful. If you munch just because there's food around- it's best to avoid snacking altogether. If you are hungry, opt for real foods. Fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds are healthier snacks.
3. **Watch your portion sizes** and use a smaller plate. Read food labels for the recommended serving sizes.
4. **Practice mindful eating.** Minimize distractions — including work and electronics. Chew slowly and thoroughly to better recognize your body's fullness signals.
5. **Get plenty of sleep.** Sleep deprivation may increase your hunger hormone levels, leading to high calorie intake and lower metabolism.
6. **Control your stress levels.** The stress hormone cortisol causes weight gain and more cravings for junk food. Options to control stress include exercise, meditation, yoga, and deep breathing.
7. **Keep meals balanced with protein.** Try to lessen carbs and include one ounce of protein with every meal. It promotes fullness, helps weight maintenance and may reduce calorie intake.
8. **Focus on fiber** which induces fullness. Look for the veggie tray, the fruits, whole grains, nuts, and seeds.
9. **Cut back on taste-testing** while cooking and baking.
10. **Bring a healthy dish to share.** Others will appreciate it.

Resource: 20 Tips to avoid weight gain during the holidays, Healthline (Nutrition) retrieved on 10/19/19 from <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/tips-to-avoid-holiday-weight-gain#section20>

More Tips to Avoid Weight Gain During the Holidays

11. **Limit your dessert intake.** Focus only on your favorites. Also take time to eat them slowly.
12. **Limit liquid calories.** Avoid alcohol, soda, and rich drinks.
13. **Use a smaller plate** which encourages portion control.
14. **Modify your recipes.** Lower the calorie content of recipes by:
 - Replacing butter with applesauce, bananas or pumpkin puree.
 - Using a lower-calorie substitute.
 - Adding dried fruit not chocolate chips or candies.
 - Flavoring dishes with herbs and spices instead of butter.
 - Not frying. Instead bake, steam, or grill.
 - Substituting low-fat or skim milk for heavy cream.
 - Replacing cream cheese, sour cream, and mayo with yogurt.
 - Flavoring beverages with extracts like vanilla, almond, and peppermint instead of butter and sugar.
 - Using club soda or sparkling water; not sweetened beverages.
 - Flavoring drinks with lemon or lime rather than sugar.
 - Adding cinnamon to holiday-themed beverages.
15. **Weigh yourself.** Check weight daily or one to two times a week.
16. **Use the buddy system.** This can keep you motivated and accountable over the holidays.
17. **Avoid processed foods.** Opt for whole foods. Cook from scratch. That way, you can monitor your diet and stay on top of your weight.
18. **Plan ahead.** Decide what and how much you'll eat ahead of time.
19. **Skip seconds.** Avoid buffet-style and extra helpings.
20. **Draw the line.** Set limits and stick to your goals. Don't abandon goals if you have a slip-up. Just start again.

Use these multiple tips and tricks faithfully as they can help keep you healthy, happy, and weight-conscious during this time of year.

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Holiday Survival Tips

From dealing with last-minute Christmas shopping or family dynamics it's easy to get overwhelmed. Try these tips to survive.

#1: Be present. Slow down. Live moment by moment.

- Reflect on what you're thankful for.
- Write down a Bible verse. Meditate on it throughout the day.
- Limit technology—especially social media.

#2: Face your fears.

- *Write down a list of things you're anxious about.* If it's a productive fear you can do something about it.
- *Develop a plan to deal with productive fears.* For example: decide what subjects to bring up at a party. Plan low cost gifts.
- *Interrupt unproductive fears:* Stop the “what-ifs” by exercising, writing in a journal, recalling a fond memory, listening to music, talking to a friend, or reciting a Bible verse.

#3: Take care of yourself. Practice habits to develop self-care:

- Accept compliments.
- Ask for help.
- Delegate tasks.
- Don't feel guilty for relaxing.
- Find an accountability partner.

#4: Let go of unrealistic expectations. Don't strive for perfection or seek approval from others. Learn to say “no” and set boundaries. Be prepared to respond to arguments, challenges, and opposition. Always respond calmly. Proverbs 15:1 *A gentle answer turns away wrath.* When things are not calm, be ready to excuse yourself and go outside for a long walk.

#5: Know you're not alone. If a loved one has passed away or you're going through a divorce, holidays can be daunting. Plan ahead. Reach out and find a community to connect with; it's easier than you think!

- Go to a local church.
- Volunteer
- Connect with a neighbor
- Learn a new hobby.

Finally, remember that God is with you. The real reason is to celebrate the hope received in the birth of Christ. One of the names of Christ is “*Immanuel*” meaning “*God with us.*” Allow the presence of God to bring you comfort and joy. Turn to Him. Talk to the Lord. Spend time in God's Word. After all, He is with you and loves you so much!

Resource: Holiday survival guide: from surviving to thriving, retrieved on 10/1/19 from <http://liferecoverygroups.com/holiday-survival-guide-from-surviving-to-thriving/?SOURCE=EBLRN>

Confused by “Best By” or “Use By” Labels?

If we can't depend on the dates stamped on food to tell us when it's time to throw it out, how do we decide what to pitch and what to keep? Resources say, “The best way to detect whether food is still good is by relying on your senses.” They advise, “Smell it, taste it.” If you're unsure throw it out.

Optimal storage conditions are more important than sell-by dates. If refrigerated at the proper temperature which is below 40 degrees F. Safe storage for some common items include:

- **Ground meats, fresh poultry:** 1 to 2 days
- **Fresh beef, veal, lamb and pork (roasts, chops and steaks):** 3 to 5 days
- **Lunch meat, opened package/deli sliced:** 3 to 5 days;
unopened package: 2 weeks
- **Leftovers:** 3 to 4 days
- **Cut fruit:** 4 days
- **Hard-boiled eggs:** 1 week
- **Chopped vegetables in an air-tight container:** 1 week
- **Pasteurized milk:** 1 week beyond sell-by date
- **Raw eggs in shell:** 3 to 5 weeks
- **Soft cheese, opened:** 2 weeks. If mold develops, toss it.
- **Hard cheese, opened:** 3 to 4 weeks. If it develops a blue-green mold on the exterior, cut away the mold plus an additional half inch below it.

About produce: Visibly aging produce can emit gases that speed the ripening of other produce. Use immediately or compost it.

So how long can food sit in the freezer before you consume it?

Here's a rough guide for some common items:

- **Soups, stews and cooked beans:** 2 to 3 months
- **Cooked or ground meat and poultry:** 3 to 6 months
- **Berries and chopped fruit:** 6 to 8 months
- **Vegetables, if blanched:** 8 to 12 months (depending on the vegetable)

Reference: Arbetter, L., *Should You Toss That Food? Let Your Senses Help You Decide* Healthy Living [AARP](https://www.aarp.org/health/healthy-living/info-2019/home-food-safety-guidelines.html?cmp=EMC-DSO-NLC-WBLTR--MCTRL-102519-F1-4119365&ET_CID=4119365&ET_RID=12815925&encparam=7NqeslcljAvJK8f5S1stqPbf50X MCMJ6x1d9VlrlBM%3d). Retrieved October 29, 2019 at https://www.aarp.org/health/healthy-living/info-2019/home-food-safety-guidelines.html?cmp=EMC-DSO-NLC-WBLTR--MCTRL-102519-F1-4119365&ET_CID=4119365&ET_RID=12815925&encparam=7NqeslcljAvJK8f5S1stqPbf50X MCMJ6x1d9VlrlBM%3d