TIPS TO BEAT THE CHRISTMAS BULGE

Weight gain over the holiday period

Most Australians can relate to increasing the link on their belt buckle when the New Year rolls around. On average Australians gain 0.8–1.5kg over the Christmas period. One to two kilograms might not sound like much but researchers have identified that weight gained over the holiday period is rarely lost.

An American study conducted in 2006 identified that the weight gained during holiday seasons usually occurs around the trunk. Weight gain in this area is associated with an increased risk of diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Why not make this year the year that you don’t have to ask for a larger belt in your Christmas stocking? Try the tips below to help you avoid gaining weight over the holiday season.

Tips to avoid weight gain over the holiday season

- Avoid going hungry to parties. Eat something light before the party to reduce your chances of snacking on high calorie party food. Some healthy snacks include a 200g tub of reduced fat yoghurt, a bowl of cereal or a cheese and tomato sandwich.

- Don’t try to lose weight over the Christmas season. Instead, aim to maintain your current weight.

- Watch your portion sizes. If your will power is weak and you know you will want to finish everything in front of you, use an entrée plate instead of a dinner plate. That way you are sure to eat less.

- Fill up with foods from the BOTTOM layer of the Healthy Living Pyramid. These foods include vegetables, fruit, breads, rice, pasta and cereals.
**Party Foods to Enjoy or Limit**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foods to Enjoy</th>
<th>Foods to Limit</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable sticks, pretzels, rice crackers</td>
<td>Creamy dips</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hummus, beetroot, tzatziki, avocado dip</td>
<td>Pies, sausage rolls, spinach triangles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sushi</td>
<td>Chips, corn chips</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sandwiches, quiches</td>
<td>Lollies, candy canes, chocolates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fruit salad with yoghurt</td>
<td>Cakes and slices with cream</td>
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**Alcohol**

Drinking alcohol (1 or 2 standard drinks a day) may add to the enjoyment of your festive events, but over-consuming alcohol can lead to weight gain.

According to the Department of Health and Ageing:

*For healthy men and women, drinking no more than two standard drinks in any day reduces your risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury over a lifetime.*

*Drinking no more than four standard drinks on a single occasion reduces the risk of alcohol-related injury arising from that occasion.*

If you choose to drink:

- Watch your serving size. Restaurants often serve wine in glasses that are three times the standard serve.
- Be careful with top-ups. Topping up your glass can lead to you losing count of the amount you have been drinking. Finish one glass before accepting a top-up.
- Alternate your drinks. Alternate one alcoholic drink with one non-alcoholic drink such as water.

**Exercise**

Try some of the following ideas to help you stay fit over the holidays:

- Ask for a gym membership as a Christmas present. That way you can stay fit all year round.
- Set yourself an exercise challenge for the New Year. Fun runs are great events to get involved in. Your local council website should provide details of sporting events held annually in your area.
Play with your children. They enjoy when you watch their games, but they LOVE when you play with them. Try outdoor cricket, throwing a Frisbee, bike riding or swimming.

If you’re on a vacation, walking is the best way to become familiar with your holiday location. It’s amazing what you can discover when you are on foot.

Use the facilities at camping grounds, motels or resorts. For example, hiring a tennis court is an inexpensive way to stay entertained for hours.

Christmas Recipes

Fruit and Nut Ice Cream Pudding

Ingredients
- ¾ cup almonds (toasted, chopped)
- 2 cups dried fruit
- 2 L ice cream (low-fat)
- 1 ½ teaspoons mixed spices
- 60 ml apple juice or brandy
- 1 cup slithered almonds (lightly roasted)

Method
1. Place fruit in a large mixing bowl, pour apple juice or brandy over fruit, and leave for a few hours. Add almonds and mixed spices.
2. Fold together with softened ice-cream.
3. Line a 6-8 cup pudding basin with plastic wrap.
4. Spoon in mixture.
5. Cover with plastic wrap and freeze overnight.
6. Cut into cake size slices and serve in dessert bowls with a sprinkle of lightly roasted slithered almonds.

Lemon Herb Yoghurt Dip

Ingredients
- 200g tub reduced-fat natural yoghurt
- ¼ cup chives (finely chopped)
- ¼ cup flat leaf parsley (chopped)
- 2 tablespoons mint (finely chopped)
- 2 teaspoons capers (drained and chopped)
- ½ teaspoon finely grated lemon rind
- 1 clove garlic (finely chopped)
- Freshly ground black pepper to taste

Method
1. Blend all ingredients in a food processor until combined.
2. Refrigerate until time to serve.
References

1. Foodsense. Consumer Reports on Health: Dodge holiday weight gain without missing the merriment. Dec 2002
