

## Q. How can I prevent weight gain during the holidays?

A. If you want to avoid packing on a few extra pounds during the holidays, you need a plan.

Why? The average adult gains a pound or more during the month of December. According to recent study that tracked the weight of 3,000 people during the holidays, that's what researchers found.<sup>1</sup>

That might not sound like a lot. But if you keep adding a pound or so every holiday season, it starts to add up. It's one reason about 74 percent of adults are overweight or obese.<sup>2</sup>

But it doesn't have to be that way. Make these healthy habits part of your holiday traditions, and you'll avoid holiday weight gain. Here's how:

### 1. Move more, sit less

When faced with a time crunch during the holidays, many people skip exercise to fit other things into their day. But to avoid gaining weight, it's even more important to stay active during this time.

Take a walk to see Christmas lights. Walk more at the mall or store. Stick to your regular exercise schedule as much as possible.

### 2. Drink more water

It's zero calories. The other drinks at the holiday party typically aren't.



For example:

- A single glass of eggnog is 300 to 500 calories.
- Fruit punch and soft drinks have 150 to 250 calories.
- A classic alcoholic drink has 150 to 225 calories.

Your body needs water to stay hydrated and support digestion, brain function, movement, and more.

### 3. Focus on fruits and vegetables

You're at the holiday buffet or party table...what should you do? Fill your plate with fruits and vegetables first. They're nutrient dense and lower in calories than desserts and dishes made with sugar, cream, or sauces.

And if you start here, you can still enjoy dessert without overeating.

### 4. Cook healthy holiday food at home

You could go out to eat with family and friends to celebrate. But you're more likely to overeat.

A survey of 364 different restaurant meals found that the average dining-out meal contains 1,500 calories.<sup>3</sup>

Add drinks, appetizers, and desserts, and one meal contains more calories than most adults need in a day.

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Instead, cook healthy food and meals at home more often during the holidays.

### 5. Maintain, don't gain

Set a goal to just maintain your weight during the holidays. Here's an easy way to help prevent weight gain: Step on the scale

Pick a frequency that works for you. Daily or just once a week. A recent study found that regular weigh-ins can help you maintain your weight or even lose a few pounds by reminding you to make healthy choices.<sup>4</sup>

When you approach the holidays this way, you can still enjoy treats, desserts, and good food without gaining weight. And these healthy habits will help you all year long.

### References

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