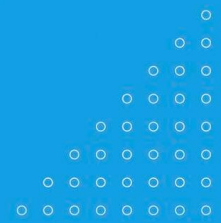




WELLNESS NEWSLETTER

December 2024



HIGHLIGHTS for the [December 2024 Newsletter](#)

Jingle All the Weigh: 5 Tips to Prevent Holiday Weight Gain

Want to prevent holiday weight gain creeping in like an uninvited guest? Check out these 5 simple tips to stay active, eat smart, and enjoy the season without packing on extra pounds.

Why Holiday Summer Sausage is on the Naughty List

Thinking about giving (or enjoying) a holiday summer sausage set? Find out why processed meats like these are on the naughty list—and discover healthier, festive alternatives for the season.

Cheers to a Healthier Holiday: Limit Alcohol & Stay Merry

Ready to toast the season? Before you pour another glass, learn how to enjoy holiday celebrations without letting alcohol derail your health or your waistline.

Y-Axis: Unplug for a Happier Holiday Season

Feeling tied to your devices this holiday season? Discover how unplugging—even just a little—can boost your happiness and bring more joy to your celebrations.

Recipe: Banana Nut Bread

Hungry for a healthier sweet bread recipe? Try this moist banana nut bread recipe made with low-fat buttermilk.

Take the December Health Challenge!

Maintain Don't Gain During the Holidays: Practice healthy habits during the holidays

Ask the Wellness Doctor:

This month Dr. Don Hall answers the question: How can I make holiday recipes healthier?



THE Y AXIS



Unplug for a Happier Holiday Season

What's your digital diet this holiday season?



Between work emails, endless social media scrolling, and holiday movie marathons, it's easy to stay glued to a screen.

But here's the catch: Research shows happiness decreases as screen time increases.⁵ After just one hour of screen time, happiness starts to dip.

This season, give yourself the gift of balance. Set aside time to unplug—enjoy a screen-free meal, take a walk, or connect face-to-face with loved ones.

You don't have to ditch devices entirely, but a little unplugging can go a long way in boosting your holiday joy.

COMMENTS?

Send comments to the editor:

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Jingle All the Weigh: 5 Tips to Prevent Holiday Weight Gain

5 healthy habits for the holidays

When Scott Calvin (played by Tim Allen) wakes up one morning in the holiday movie *The Santa Clause*, something isn't right.

His pajamas are tighter. His belly is bigger. He thinks there's something wrong with the bathroom mirror and scale.

You're not going to gain 40 pounds overnight like the guy in the red suit. But research shows the average adult gains about 1 to 2 pounds during the holidays.¹

Here are 5 ways to help prevent holiday weight gain:

- 1. Be active at least 30 minutes a day.** Try brisk walking, weight lifting, or dashing through the snow. Move more, sit less during the holidays.
- 2. Eat healthy foods and portion sizes.** Keep it simple. Most of your food should come from fruits, vegetables, fish, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds. Drink more water and less alcohol. Going to a party?

Eat less during the day before you go.

- 3. Start the day with a healthy breakfast.** Based on data from the National Weight Control Registry, people who lose weight and keep it off eat breakfast daily. Try whole-grain toast or steel-cut oats, fruit, or Greek yogurt.
- 4. Track your progress.** Weigh yourself once a week. Keep a food diary. Write it down or use a mobile app to record your weight, food choices, and exercise. It's a good way to help you be accountable, and remember to make healthy choices.
- 5. Be consistent.** Eat right and stay active, even on the weekends. If you overeat at a party or skip exercise, it's no big deal. Hit restart and get back on track the next day.

Start now and give yourself the gift of good health this holiday season.

MORE

Avoid weight gain during the holidays
<https://tinyurl.com/y53ho4gj>

Why Holiday Summer Sausage is on the Naughty List

Eating processed meats raises cancer risk

Thinking about gifting one of those holiday-ready summer sausage sets? Or maybe you've unwrapped one yourself, tucked inside a festive basket. While these meaty treats may be a holiday staple, there's a scary reason to scratch them off the gift list.

The not-so-jolly truth about processed meats

Research from the American Institute for Cancer Research shows that processed meats can significantly raise your risk for certain cancers.²

Foods like summer sausage, salami, bacon, and cold cuts may increase cancer risk as much as tobacco or asbestos—not the kind of holiday surprise anyone wants.

- Every 50 grams of processed meat (about one hot dog or two slices of deli meat) increases cancer risk by approximately 16%.

- Many people consume processed meats daily, and even more during the holidays, making this a timely concern.



Skip processed meats for healthier options

Want to eat healthier during the holidays? Skip processed meats for these healthier options, and eat more:

- **Lean proteins** like turkey, chicken, or fish instead of salami or ham.
- **Plant-based alternatives** like festive lentil or chickpea dishes, or a leafy-green salad with dried cranberries.



Banana Nut Bread

Hungry for a healthier sweet bread recipe? Try this moist banana nut bread recipe made with low-fat buttermilk⁴

Ingredients

- 1 C bananas, mashed
- 1/3 C low-fat buttermilk
- 1/2 C brown sugar
- 1/4 C margarine
- 1 egg or egg substitute
- 2 C flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 C pecans

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350° F. Lightly oil a 9x5-inch loaf pan.
2. In small bowl, mix bananas and buttermilk.
3. In large bowl, mix brown sugar and margarine. Beat in egg. Then add banana mixture.
4. In another bowl, mix dry ingredients. Stir until blended. Then mix in nuts.
5. Spoon mixture into loaf pan.
6. Bake for 50 to 55 minutes. Cool 5 minutes in pan.
7. Remove from pan and complete cooling on wire rack before slicing

Serves 8. 133 calories per serving, serving.

Cheers to a Healthier Holiday: Limit Alcohol & Stay Merry

The holidays are here, and with them come parties, gatherings, and maybe a glass of eggnog or two.

But before you pour that next round of holiday cheer, consider how alcohol might impact your health. While enjoying an occasional drink is fine for many, too much can lead to more than just a hangover.

The not-so-merry side of alcohol

Overindulging in alcohol can:

- **Pile on empty calories:** That festive cocktail? It's loaded with sugar and calories.
- **Stimulate appetite:** Alcohol can make you hungrier, leading to overeating.
- **Lead to weight gain:** Extra calories and less mindful eating add up fast.
- **Cloud judgment:** Poor decisions, anyone?
- **Harm your health:** Long-term risks include chronic diseases and certain cancers.
- If you choose to drink, follow these holiday-friendly guidelines:³
- **Men:** No more than 2 drinks per day.
- **Women:** Stick to 1 drink per day (or none if pregnant).
- **Seniors:** Keep it to 1 drink per day if you're over 65.

And what counts as a drink? Think 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of distilled spirits.

Avoid alcohol or sip smarter

Looking for ways to stay festive without overindulging? Try these:

- **Mocktail magic:** Create alcohol-free versions of your favorite drinks.
- **Stay hydrated:** Focus on drinking enough water, before drinking alcohol.
- **Eat before you drink:** A healthy snack can curb overindulgence.

The best gift you can give yourself this holiday season? A healthier you. Raise your (water) glass to make mindful choices that keep the holiday spirit bright and your health on track.



MORE

Alcohol's effects on the body
<https://tinyurl.com/yjtsfxm>

Why Holiday Summer Sausage is on the Naughty List (continued from page 1)

- **Healthy snacks** like fresh fruits, vegetables, nuts, and whole-grain crackers (instead of traditional meat-and-cheese spreads)

Scratch summer sausage off the gift list

Skip the summer sausage gift set, and make healthier choices. Good health is a gift that keeps on giving.

MORE

How to eat less red meat
<https://tinyurl.com/y4uuh79n>

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Take the December Health Challenge! Maintain Don't Gain During the Holidays

Ask the Wellness Doctor:

This month Dr. Don Hall answers the question: How can I make holiday recipes healthier?



Maintain Don't Gain During the Holidays

CHALLENGE

Practice healthy habits during the holidays

Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read "Maintain Don't Gain During the Holidays"
2. Create a plan around food, exercise and healthy lifestyle habits to avoid weight gain during the holidays.
3. Keep a record of your completed health challenge in case your organization requires documentation.



The holidays are here. And between now and New Year's a lot of people have their own battle of the bulge.

You know...trying to avoid gaining weight and looking like that jolly old elf with an affinity for cookies and milk.

Easier said than done with so many office parties, special dinners, and family gatherings on the schedule. Right?

If you've been-there-done-that and still gained a few pounds during the holidays, you're not alone.

Research shows that the average person might only gain 1 to 2 pounds during the holidays, but most don't lose the extra weight.¹ And that starts to add up year after year.

So what are you going to do about it? Cutting out all sweets, treats, and delicious dinners sounds like a pretty crummy way to celebrate the holidays. Don't do that, OK.

You can survive the holiday season without packing on the pounds, and you won't have to be besties with that old miser Ebenezer Scrooge. We'll show you how in this month's health challenge: Maintain Don't Gain During the Holidays.

3 tips for healthier holidays
<https://tinyurl.com/4tk5he88>

Quiz: Sleigh the Scale

How much do you know about preventing holiday weight gain? Take the quiz to find out.



T F

1. Stepping on the scale at least once a week can help you avoid gaining weight.
2. Drinking water before meals can help eat less, control appetite and support weight management.
3. Whether you eat fast, or eat slow, it doesn't really have an impact on your weight.
4. Studies show that people who keep a food diary lose more weight than people who don't.
5. Lack of sleep can increase hormones linked to appetite and hunger.

Check your answers. How did you do? You can enjoy the holidays without gaining weight. And you don't need a special diet, magic pill, or workout plan. Just stick with healthy eating habits, regular exercise, and smart lifestyle choices. And you'll have room for dessert, too.

Answers: 1.True. 2.True. 3.False. 4.True. 5.True.

Healthy-Weight Habits: The Secret to Staying Merry & Bright

If you want to protect your health, feel better, and have a happier holiday season, here's a little secret: Healthy-weight habits can have a positive effect on your health.



When you maintain a healthy weight or lose weight if you need to, it helps lower the risk for serious health problems like:²

- Heart disease
- Stroke
- High blood pressure
- Type 2 diabetes
- Kidney disease
- Breathing problems
- Sleep disorders
- Mental health problems
- Certain types of cancer

If you're already a few pounds heavier than you should be, you're not alone. An estimated 74 percent of all adults in the United States are overweight or obese.³

But that doesn't mean you should just give up on watching your weight during the holidays. Maintaining your weight is still better than gaining another few pounds between now and Jan. 1.



10 Healthy Holiday Habits to Prevent Weight Gain

Egg nog, desserts, cheeseballs, and large meals. They're everywhere during the holidays. And if your schedule is as hectic as most, finding time to exercise can be about as likely as meeting the real Santa Claus. But a few healthy holiday habits can help you avoid gaining weight.

1. Ring the breakfast bell

People who eat a healthy breakfast have less abdominal fat than those who don't.⁴ Instead of pancakes drenched in syrup, greasy sausage, and sugar-sweetened coffee, try:

- 1-2 pieces of fresh fruit (e.g., orange)
- A serving of whole grains (e.g., 1/2 C steel-cut oats or 1 piece whole-wheat toast)
- A glass of milk, soymilk, black coffee, or 100% fruit juice
- One serving of healthy fats (e.g., small handful of almonds)
- And a healthy protein (egg whites or Egg Beaters®).

2. Fiber: Santa's secret weapon

Studies show that eating fiber-rich foods helps control hunger and aid in weight management.⁵ Foods high in fiber include:

- Salads
- Soups
- Fruits & vegetables
- Whole-grain breads & cereals

3. Hydrate for holiday happiness

Carry a water bottle with you and drink throughout the day. Drink water with meals instead of juice, soda, or alcohol.

12 tips for holiday eating
<https://tinyurl.com/bd396w9r>

Research shows drinking water can help:⁶

- Control calories
- Reduce hunger
- Support weight management

4. Choo-choo-chew your food

Meal time shouldn't be like an action-packed ride on the Polar Express.

Do this: Take a bite, put your fork down, and chew slowly.

This gives your body time to send signals to your brain that you feel full.⁷

5. Decorate your door

The refrigerator door. Move aside some of the clutter. Find a free magnet.

Decorate your door with inspirational pictures or messages, a snapshot of yourself when you weighed less, or your goal weight. The daily reminder will help you make better choices.

6. Make a list & check it twice

Before you head to the grocery store, plan healthy meals and make a list of what you need. You'll be less likely to buy junk food. Keep a food journal, too.

Studies show that tracking your calories and what you eat can help you manage your weight.⁸

7. Control cookie cravings

When you come face to face with dessert during the holidays, enjoy a sample. But don't overdo it.

Prevent holiday weight gain
<https://tinyurl.com/47jeu9e>

Cookies, desserts, and sweet treats are high in calories that can lead to weight gain.

8. Enjoy more silent nights

People who cut sleep short are more likely to gain weight.⁹ Staying up late is a recipe for snacking and weight gain. Aim for 7 to 9 hours of sleep per night.

9. Take a walk to explore your wonderland

Look for ways to be active during the holidays. Take a walk after a big meal. Park farther away when you go shopping. Sign up for a holiday fun run. Exercise burns calories, improves mood, and uses fat for energy.¹⁰

10. Sleigh stress

High stress levels, worry, and discouragement can lead to weight gain. But you can do something about it.¹¹

When planning your schedule, add in time to relax and have fun. Sing carols with friends. Sip hot tea in front of your lit tree. These are better ways to cope than overeating holiday foods.

Follow these healthy holiday habits, and when you step on the scale Jan. 1, you'll be glad you did.

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CHALLENGE
Practice healthy habits during the holidays

Maintain Don't Gain During the Holidays

Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, or add to your digital calendar).
2. Record the number of days you practice healthy-weight habits during the holidays.
3. Use the calendar to record the actions and choices you make to prevent weight gain during the holidays.
4. Review your progress at the end of each day, week, and at the end of the month. Then keep up the practice for a lifetime of best health.

MONTH:							HC = Health Challenge™	ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary	
HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____		
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_____ Number of days this month I practice healthy-weight habits
 _____ Number of days this month I exercised at least 30 minutes

Other wellness projects completed this month:

Name _____ Date _____

Q. How can I make holiday recipes healthier?

A. So you're hosting and want to make the meal a little healthier? That's great.

You don't have to give up those favorite family dishes. But you can make simple-ingredient swaps (without compromising taste), to serve healthier food.¹

Here are some simple substitutes you can make:²

Dairy Products

- Replace whole milk or cream with fat-free milk or soy milk.
- Substitute plain, fat-free or low-fat yogurt for sour cream.

Spices & Seasonings

- Use a variety of herbs and spices in place of salt.
- Use low-sodium bouillon and broths, instead of regular bouillons and broths.

Oils & Butter

- Instead of cooking with lard, butter, shortening, or other fats that are hard at room temperature, use a small amount of vegetable oil.
- Replace hard-stick margarine with regular-soft margarine made with vegetable oil. Healthier margarine includes no trans fats and lists liquid-vegetable oil as the first ingredient on the food label.

Eggs

In baking or cooking, use egg whites or an egg substitute.



Meats & Poultry

- If you eat meat, choose a lean cut of meat and remove any visible fat.
- Remove skin from chicken and other poultry where fat is stored before cooking.

Sandwiches & Salads

- Use fat-free or low-fat mayonnaise, instead of regular versions.
- Make your own low-calorie vinaigrette salad dressing with equal parts water and vinegar or lemon juice, and half as much oil.
- Garnish salads with fruits and vegetables instead of cheese and meats.

Soups & Stews

- Use cooking spray, water, or stock to sauté onion for flavoring stews, soups, and sauces.
- Remove fat from homemade broths, soups, and stews by chilling after cooking. Before reheating the dish, lift off the hardened fat that formed at the surface.
- If you don't have time to chill the dish, then float a few ice cubes on the surface of the warm liquid to harden the fat. Then, remove and discard the fat.

ASK THE Wellness DOCTOR

Breads

- When making muffins or quick breads, use 3 ripe, well-mashed bananas for each 1/2 C of butter or oil called for in the recipe.
- Applesauce also works as a good substitute for butter, margarine, oil, or shortening in muffins, quick breads, and cookies.

Desserts

- Make your own pie crust without the trans fat used in pre-made pie crust. Use vegetable oil in place of butter or shortening.
- For chocolate desserts, use 3 T of cocoa instead of 1 ounce of baking chocolate. If fat is needed to replace the fat found in chocolate, add 1 T or less of vegetable oil.
- To make cakes and soft-drop cookies, use no more than 2 T of fat for each cup of flour.

Before you start cooking, review this list of substitute ingredients and make sure you have everything you need to make your meal a little healthier.

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