



We're in that season now. You know, that time of year when there is a lot of celebrating--parties, alcohol, sweets, and all those wonderful traditional foods Mom made when you were a kid. It starts around Halloween--with the candy "you **have to purchase**" for all the 'Trick-or-Treaters'--that you end up eating some, or a lot, of yourself. And it ends after New Years--after two major holiday meals and all the holiday foods, parties and alcohol that go with the season. It's a well know fact that **most people gain between 2 and 5 pounds** over "The Holiday Season" every year.

How can you enjoy the holidays while still trying to maintain your health AND your weight? Here are some healthy holiday tips to help you NOT gain those extra pounds and still have a festive time:

1. Be realistic: trying to lose weight during the holidays may be a self defeating goal. Instead, strive to maintain your weight.
2. Skipping meals is a recipe for over-indulging at the next meal. **That can be a real weight gainer.** And it's helpful to eat a piece of fruit or other light snack before going to a party or gathering so your appetite is not too large when you finally do eat.
3. Use a plate for even the smallest snack--you'll eat less.
4. Survey party buffets before filling your plate. Choose your favorite foods and skip your least favorite. Include vegetables and fruits to keep your plate balanced.
5. Don't buy candy or goodies too far ahead of an event. Once purchased, keep them out of site.



6. Be careful of beverages: alcohol can lessen inhibitions thereby making it easy to overeat. Non alcoholic beverages can be full of empty calories (sugar and fat).

7. If you're bringing a dish to share, make it healthful **AND** delicious. That way you'll know there will be one thing you can munch on without racking up calories too fast.

8. Plan time for exercise. It can relieve holiday stress and prevent weight gain. A moderate and daily increase in exercise can help to partially offset increased holiday eating. Try 10 or 15 minute brisk walks twice a day.

Forget the all of nothing mindset. Depriving yourself of special holiday foods or feeling guilty when you do enjoy them isn't a healthful eating strategy. And deprivation and guilt are certainly not part of the holiday spirit.