

# HEALTHY EATING THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Reports show that an average person gains between three and five kilograms over the festive season. Most of this weight is maintained from thereon despite our New Year's resolutions of eating clean in January. Think: Veganuary and Dry January!

So, why do we fall into the trap of bad eating habits during the holiday season? Well, because wherever we go, there is always someone waiting to thrust a glass of wine or a box of chocolates into our hands. Surely it would be rude to refuse, it is the festive season after all.



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Your trip to the local supermarket turns into an adventure. You find yourself in a maze of aisles displaying a range of colourful, tempting goodies that are excitingly packaged and screaming at you to buy and eat them. Even visits to friends and family are a challenge. You arrive to a table decked out with all manner of goodies, and as the wine bottle cork lets out a subtle pop in the kitchen, you resign yourself to the fact that you may as well give in. All this, coupled with the huge dinners, parties and festivities often associated with the holiday season makes maintaining control a huge challenge.

Food will always be a major part of the holiday season. Important to note that there is certainly nothing wrong with that. This is not to say that we should not allow ourselves to indulge a little but should do so in moderation and maintain a varied diet. If we allow ourselves to completely lose control over the festive season, it increases the likelihood of us continuing to eat unhealthily long after the festivities have ended. Falling into the trap of unhealthy eating is a hard habit to break.

## A way forward

Researchers have found that only around 22 per cent of New Year's diet resolutions make it to February. Before we break some tips on maintaining healthy eating habits during the cheerful season, allow us to remind you that being health conscious does not necessarily mean that you cannot enjoy a little bit of what you fancy. It simply means that you should be ten steps ahead by continuing to be vigilant.

**Here are a few practical ways to strike a balance between maintaining a healthy diet and joining in on the eating fun:**

- **Exercise.** Most people have some extra time available over the holiday season. Use this time to develop a regular and sustainable exercise routine. This will help burn off the excess calories and fat consumed over this period. It will also get you into the habit of exercising — something worth continuing after the season is over.



- **Review your cooking methods.** Instead of frying, grill your food. For roasting, use one of the many available low-calorie spray oils. Try steaming vegetables to retain nutrients and flavour.
- **Trim back on the extras.** Go all out and deck the halls with boughs of holly, glitter and lights, but when it comes to holiday food, accessorise with care. To shave off calories, go easy when adding nuts, cheese, cream sauces, gravy, butter and whipped cream. These extras do not add much to the meal but can definitely add a few centimetres to your waistline.
- **Skip the appetisers.** If you need to nibble on something before the meal, go for vegetables, fruit, salsa or a handful of nuts.
- **Stock up on healthy snacks.** Fill up your trolley with raw vegetables such as carrots or celery. These make a great, simple snack in times of temptation.
- **Balance your meals out.** Do not be tempted to fill up your plate with purely rich, calorie-laden food. Instead, have a little of everything including fruit and vegetables. This way, you will still get to indulge as well as receive valuable nutrients and vitamins.
- **Moderate alcohol intake.** Do not forget that alcohol contributes to weight gain. That innocent-looking glass of sparkly wine, or that small bottle of beer may look as though it will do no harm, but alcoholic drinks are loaded with calories. Cut your alcohol calories in half by alternating water between alcoholic beverages. There are plenty of lower-calorie beers and wines available so always opt for the healthier version where possible.
- **Be assertive.** Do not succumb to the pressure to say “yes” to everyone that offers you food or a drink. If you are not hungry, it is completely okay to decline politely. Do not allow yourself to be bullied into eating when you do not feel like it.

The main rule to remember is moderation! Try balancing the rich foods that we consume over this period with regular servings of fruit and vegetables.