

## November: Healthy Holidays

The holiday season is upon us! The weather is getting colder, the days are getting shorter, and you're starting to think that hibernation might be the best way to get through winter! Between family gatherings, work parties, and various holiday events, it's easy to let your healthy habits slide for a month or two. Every day seems to bring new treats, heavy meals and calorie-laden beverages. You have great intentions, but before you know it, January has arrived and your scale is reading a few pounds heavier than it was in November.



The average American adult gains 1-2 pounds each year during the months of November and December. While this may not seem like a large amount, unfortunately most people don't ever lose those pounds during the rest of the year. Instead, those pounds keep piling on every year and can easily become a 10 to 20 pound weight gain over ten years. Here are some tips for maintaining your weight during the holiday season:

- **Don't skip meals.** It's tempting to want to save extra calories for a large meal or evening party by not eating during the day. But this can cause you to overeat because you are more hungry than normal. Instead, start each day with a healthy breakfast, and make sure to also eat a healthy lunch and dinner. Eat lots of fresh fruits and vegetables. Keeping yourself on your regular eating schedule will make it easier to pass on extra treats that you don't need or even want.



- **Eat a healthy snack before evening parties.** Have some fruit or vegetables and a small amount of healthy protein before you go out for the evening. You'll be less likely to snack later on in the evening.
- **Be a social butterfly.** You'll burn more calories if you move around the room at a party, so be the first person on the dance floor, or make a point to mingle and make new friends. This will also keep you away from the food table, so you'll be less tempted to snack.
- **Move every day.** Make time for exercise, even if you don't have time for your normal workout. If you are short on time, try to do what you can. Get up early and exercise before work. Go for a walk instead of a nap after your Thanksgiving dinner. Offer to walk your friend's dog if they are out of town, or help shovel an elderly neighbor's sidewalk. You'll spread good cheer and burn calories!

- **Watch your alcohol intake.** Calories in sugary drinks can add up quickly. Try to have just one or two drinks. Space out your drinks by alternating alcoholic beverages and water or club soda. Too much alcohol can also lower your ability to stick to your healthy eating habits, which is just one more reason to stick to alcohol-free options.
- **Only eat what you know you will enjoy.** It's easy to be talked into having that second helping of potatoes or another piece of pie, even if you aren't really hungry for it. Try to fill your plate with healthy options, and just take a small spoonful of the things you know aren't as good for you. But don't feel the need to eat everything! Ask yourself which treats you will really enjoy and treat yourself to those dishes. That way you won't feel deprived, and will be less likely to overeat later on in the day.
- **Offer to bring a healthy dish.** When you go to a party or holiday dinner, offer to bring along a healthy dish to pass or a fruit and vegetable platter. That way you will be guaranteed to have something healthy to eat.
- **Be realistic.** Chances are, the next couple months won't be the months in which you lose weight. But even getting through the rest of the year without gaining any weight is a success! Aim to maintain through the holidays. This will make it easier to stay healthy in the New Year!

The Public Health Department of Dayton and Montgomery County is also encouraging its residents to stay healthy during the holidays. Take a look at their new program, **Not a Single Pound**, to see how you can get involved with your coworkers or as an individual. Imagine how great you will feel when you get through the season without gaining any weight! Are you up for the challenge?

This information is part of **The Healthy at 80 program**. **Healthy at 80** is **Community Health Centers of Greater Dayton's (CHCGD)** attempt to provide information on living well and living healthy; so that you will not only be alive at 80 years old, but you will also be healthy enough to enjoy those years.