



Shedding Holiday Weight

Guilty of overeating during the holidays? Here are 20 simple ways to beat weight gain and get back to your pre-pumpkin pie and turkey self.



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1. **Drink water.** People often mistake thirst for hunger, so next time you feel like noshing, reach for water first. Drinking also helps you feel full. Some experts suggest sipping water (or iced tea) just before you sit down to a meal. Continue drinking as you eat to add volume and weight to your meal.

2. **Set realistic goals.** One or two pounds a week maximum is doable. Top weight-loss programs advocate stopping after the first 10 pounds and maintaining that loss for about six months before trying to lose any more.
3. **Build in splurges.** If you allow yourself to eat whatever you want for 2 meals out of every 21, you won't inflict enough damage to subvert your weight loss. And you'll feel less deprived.
4. **Count to 10.** Studies suggest that the average craving lasts only about 10 minutes. So before caving in to your urge, set your mental timer for a 10-minute time-out. Use the time to tackle an item on your to-do list; choose one that will give you a sense of accomplishment - and get you out of the kitchen.
5. **Eat more often.** People who have kept their weight off for more than a few years tend to eat an average of five times a day. Light, frequent meals curb your appetite, boost your energy, improve your mood and even speed your metabolism, since the process of digestion itself burns calories.
6. **Make weekly resolutions.** Don't try to overhaul your diet overnight. If you make too many changes at once, chances are you'll get frustrated and throw in the towel. Instead, make one change, such as eating at least one piece of fruit daily, every week.
7. **Start with 10%.** People who start by focusing on achieving just 10% of their long-range weight-loss goal may have the best chance of ultimate success. Losing those first pounds yields the biggest health gains, too, since belly fat is usually the first to come off and is the most dangerous.
8. **Spike your meals with salsa.** This spicy condiment can stand in for mayo to deliver plenty of flavor without the fat. Mix it with a bit of low-fat yogurt to make tuna salad. Spread it on a veggie burger, or serve it with chicken or fish.
9. **Take one-third off.** When you eat dinner out, reduce the temptation to clean your plate by setting aside one-third of your meal. Ask the server for a doggie bag, and take it home for lunch the next day. Try serving yourself one-third less at home too. This simple tactic could subtract more than 500 calories a day.
10. **Go easy on the alcohol.** Remember that alcohol is a source of calories. A 12-ounce beer has 150 calories; a 3.5-ounce glass of wine, 85. A margarita packs a bigger caloric punch. Even worse offenders are creamy cocktails, such as brandy alexanders and mudslides - equivalent to drinking a rich dessert. The bottom line: If you're trying to lose weight, stick with water.
11. **Write notes to yourself.** To help you stay on track, post notes to yourself on the fridge and the pantry. Put up a little stop sign or make tags with questions like "Do you want this food enough to wear it?" and "Are the calories worth the consequences?"
12. **Stay away from sodas.** Soft drinks are a major source of empty calories in the American diet. We drink twice as much soda as milk and nearly six times more soda than fruit juice. But fluids don't satisfy your appetite as well as solids. A study at Purdue University found that when people were fed 450 calories daily as jelly beans or as soda, the soda drinkers gained a significant amount of weight, but the jelly-bean eaters compensated for the extra calories by cutting back on other food. So if you crave something sweet, you're better off chewing it than gulping it. If you're truly thirsty, reach for water or unsweetened iced tea instead of soda.
13. **Don't just eat - dine.** Eating on the run or in front of the tube invites mindless munching. Instead, set the table every time you eat. Make a conscious choice to sit down and savor every bite. Placing a portion of chips on your best china helps focus your attention so you don't eat the whole bag.
14. **Up your protein (a little).** Research suggests that protein prolongs the feeling of fullness better than carbohydrates or fats do. Studies in Scotland, Denmark, Sweden and England found that people who ate a high-protein breakfast or lunch were less hungry at their next meal. Protein also requires a few more calories to digest. Just don't go overboard. Stick to low-fat protein sources like low-fat yogurt or cottage cheese, low-fat soy drinks or snacks, or

thinly sliced turkey breast.

15. **Learn how to measure.** It's easy to misjudge portion sizes. Pull out the measuring spoons and cups, especially for full-fat salad dressings, dairy foods and mayo.
16. **Make smart substitutions.** Look for nutritious low-calorie alternatives to sugary, high-fat treats. Try frozen grapes instead of candy. Use air-popped popcorn instead of oil-popped. Dip fresh strawberries in fat-free fudge sauce for a sensuous chocolaty treat.
17. **Have a "party plan."** When attending a party, offer to bring a plate. Arriving armed with chopped fresh veggies and a low-fat dip - or any other low-calorie snack - ensures that you'll have something to snack on without feeling guilty.
18. **Think positively.** Experts note that low self-esteem is a major cause of overeating. Train yourself to focus on your best points rather than your weak spots. Buy clothes that fit and flatter you at your current weight. Update your hairstyle and get a makeup consultation so you feel attractive today.
19. **Give yourself a break.** No one says you have to reach your goal without making mistakes along the way. Tell yourself you can succeed in losing weight by taking things one step at a time and starting fresh whenever you slip up. If you overeat one night, just get back on track in the morning by focusing on what's worked for you in the past.
20. **Relax!** Some people binge when they're stressed. A Yale University study found that women who secreted the most cortisol (a hormone released during stress) ate the most high-fat food after stress. The combination of cortisol and insulin prompts the body to store fat in preparation for possible starvation - just what you don't need. If stress has a stronghold on your life, try learning yoga, meditation, or simple breathing exercises.

GotHealth? Tip of the Month



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Tip: Set an achievable goal and start small – focus on losing 1 pound the first week. To do so, you'll need to eliminate a minimum of 500 calories each day through diet or exercise.

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