

Avoid holiday weight gain the easy way

It's almost that time when meals of turkey, stuffing, and desserts become never-ending and so does your capacity for food intake. You want to enjoy holiday gatherings without hating the mirror in January. Here are some painless tools to avoid weight gain and still manage your tight schedule.

Pay attention to what you're eating. When was the last time you pulled into the driveway and realized you didn't remember getting there? We also eat on autopilot especially when socializing. Staying mindful of our behaviors means paying attention to what we're doing. It also means making conscious choices. When we do this, we reach goals faster. It's true with careers and finances. Why not health?

Look at every bite before you eat. We're talking about a few seconds; no one will notice. Food's visual appeal has a psychological effect. It helps satisfy hunger and gives a mental checklist of what you're eating.

Eat slowly. Your brain needs time to figure out you're full. Slow eaters oftentimes have less weight issues because the physiological cue of fullness is present. If you clean the plate in 10 minutes, you'll go back for seconds. Wait 20 minutes; you might not be hungry.

Eat smaller meals throughout the day. The body prefers food about every three hours. Include tasty and healthy snacks like low-fat spicy popcorn, crunchy vegetables with a low-calorie dip, and a small low-fat milkshake made with fresh fruit and cinnamon. Your body will reward you.

Go to sleep and lose weight. Isn't that a dream come true? A 2004 study published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* showed the result of getting only four to five hours of sleep: weight gain. Hormones that regulate appetite are changed when you don't sleep enough. You're hungrier the next day.

Sleep more, eat often, and you'll avoid weight gain? It doesn't get less painful than that.