



May Your Holiday Be Bright, and Your Waistline Light!

By Dr. Michelle Torrance, ND, LAc

Holidays, and the celebratory eating that goes with them, can be difficult to navigate, especially if you are trying to lose weight. It is especially disheartening to work hard all the way up to the holidays, only to regain what you've lost, and have to start again in the New Year. **What to do?**

You have three options when you are on a weight-loss plan to handle a holiday feast successfully, and here they are:

1. Stay on Your Plan

Tough as this is, it is the most efficient way to maintain your weight-loss momentum. Now this doesn't mean that you can't have the yummy foods commonly associated with your holiday meal, but it does mean that you will have to modify where you can, prepare ahead or bring your own foods to eat along with your family and friends, and possibly just say "no" to dessert.

2. Modify

This is the hardest way to manage a holiday dinner, but it can also be the most satisfying. Although you will be going off plan, you are moderating the damage done. What do I mean?

Stick to your plan as best as possible, but with allowances for this one day. For example, instead of your lean chicken breast or cut of pork, you go ahead and have a modest portion of the ham. Another example: eat a devilled egg, but get most of the filling out, or better yet, make them yourself without all the mayo! The egg white portion, of course, is good to go.

3. Enjoy the Meal & Get Back on Track

Really, I mean it. Eat as you normally would around the holiday table, and tomorrow, jump right back on that weight-loss train with 100% effort!

Where do folks go wrong? By eating the leftovers! That makes the holiday dinner go on, and on, and on. It brings your weight loss efforts to an utter stand-still. So, don't snack on the carrots tomorrow, and don't nibble on the pie, the Jello mold, the yam dish or the biscuits. Send your guests home with goody bags!

4. Other Tips

- Watch the alcohol – and even the non-alcoholic drinks! A cup of egg nog can easily have over 300 calories, 19 grams of fat and 34.4 grams of sugar! Eek! Trust me, it's not that good.
- Eat some protein before you go. Protein is a great way to blunt hunger signals. Although you may still over-indulge, this will help you keep it to a minimum. Some good options include a low-sodium can of tuna, ½ cup of cottage cheese or some scrambled egg whites.

Damage Control – Before and After

- Before: Time your workouts. If you know you are going to have a very dense meal that has lots of carbohydrates (starchy foods like potatoes, corn, stuffing, desserts and the like), try to get in a really hard workout prior to eating it.
- After: Do a little more cardio the day after – either a little longer duration or up the intensity a little bit. Try to moderate your foods for the day, eating just a little bit lighter. And don't forget, most importantly, **drink your water!** And a little extra just for good measure!

Will the holiday eating affect your weight loss for the week? Yes, of course it will. However, it is an excellent lesson in weight maintenance. **Remember, maintaining your weight after you lose it is more important than losing it in the first place.** This principle of weight maintenance is that you should “eat clean” 80-90% of the time, so that you can have the flexibility to absorb the higher calorie days, like holiday celebrations, the other 20%!

Enjoy, and Happy New Year!