Say NO to the Holiday Pounds

By Sarah LeBlanc

Imagine you are at the mall and your favorite store is giving away the most adorable scarves, shoes, purses, and fun jewelry as part of their annual promotion event. The only restriction is that everything has to fit in the tiny, party-favor sized bag that the store provides you. “It’s a tough job, but somebody’s got to do it,” your friend says with a smile, as she hands you the bag. You slowly glance over all the sparkles and shimmers illuminating from each shelf, wondering how you will ever decide which items to choose.

Now imagine yourself in a slightly different scenario. Thanksgiving has finally arrived, and the family is seated for dinner. The candles are lit, the table is set, and all of your favorite foods and desserts are making an appearance. That diet you went on last week? Well, it’s just going to have to wait. “Tomorrow,” you utter to yourself as your grandmother pulls the pecan pie from the oven. “There’s always tomorrow.”

Just as we would eagerly stuff our bags full of free goodies at the mall, most of us will stuff ourselves silly during the feasts of the holidays as well. But before you panic over what may seem like an inevitable weight gain, or start searching for the newest diet remedy, remind yourself that not everyone will gain these 5 pounds. And guess what? You can make smart choices while still enjoying your favorite foods: no gimmicks or fad diets required. You can go through the holiday season without stressing over weight gain. Read on for a few simple tips and tricks that will help you maintain your weight through the holiday season and well into the New Year!

Eat what you love—just in smaller amounts!

Have you ever vowed that never again would you smell, touch, or look at a piece of chocolate? This immediately sets you up for needing a piece of chocolate, right? If this sounds a little too familiar, it’s time to quit the “all or nothing” group. We want what we can’t have, so it’s important that you always let yourself have a small amount of your favorite foods, especially during the holidays. Nothing is off limits! The secret is to choose a small piece of your very favorite foods and savor every bite.

Start the day off right!
You’ve heard it time and time again: breakfast is important! It will prevent your blood sugar from rising and falling, keeps you fueled for the morning, and can prevent unwanted bingeing on calorie-laden foods. A healthy breakfast starts the day off right, so don’t skimp on such an important meal. Try a couple of whole wheat toasts with a tablespoon of peanut butter, a banana and a glass of milk for an easy breakfast to-go. Or pour yourself a serving of cheerios, top with a small handful of walnuts, add some sliced bananas, and pour on some milk or soymilk. Both are healthy choices that will get you going on the right foot!

Don’t shop till you drop!

If you find that you’re spending long shopping days at the mall, going hours without food may become problematic. When you skip a meal or go longer then 3-4 hours without a snack, you’re only setting yourself up for a binge later in the day! To keep yourself well fueled, pack a healthy snack in your purse, such as a handful of almonds and an apple. Remember to drink plenty of fluids too! If you keep yourself well hydrated and fueled with healthy snacks, you won’t be “dropping” anytime soon!

Spread the love—and food!—during the holidays.

Any dietitian will tell you that one day won’t make or break your healthy eating plan. However, the leftovers that sit in your fridge for a week might potentially cause a little damage if you find yourself routinely going back for just a little more pumpkin pie. Be prepared! Have paper plates, plastic bags, and plastic containers available to send people home with any leftover baked goods. Let people take home some of the side dishes that weren’t eaten during the meal. Freeze the turkey, rolls, and other baked goods for a quick and easy family dinner in the following weeks. By avoiding the overabundance of leftover desserts and other high calorie foods, you’ll avoid unwanted weight gain!

Pump up the energy!

While overindulgence is partially to blame for the holiday weight gain, lack of activity is also part of the problem. “It’s too cold outside.” “I’m way too tired.” “I’m just so busy.” The excuses of why we can’t exercise are endless. But activities don’t have to take up a lot of your time, nor do they have to be highly strenuous. Try going for a brisk afternoon walk with a friend. Take a few laps around the mall before continuing your shopping trip. Intermittently do
a few jumping jacks and stretches between wrapping gifts. Have an impromptu snowman making party with the kids. Anything that gets you out and moving is going to burn some extra calories, keep you energized, and snuff away any stress!

**If at first you don’t succeed...**

Remember not to beat yourself up if you happen to overindulge at a party. Treat it not as a failure on your part, but simply as part of the learning process. The important focus should be on an overall healthy and balanced eating plan, and one day won’t make or break your diet!

By following these simple tips, you’ll have a happy, stress-free holiday season that’s free of any weight gain woes. Happy Holidays! 😊

References: