

Eating for the Holidays...Health and Fitness

Something about the holiday season makes our choice to eat sensibly more difficult for a good number of us. We know the feeling of having too much to do and not enough time to do it. It can be overwhelming! Stress eating and holiday parties may add to our holiday weight gain worries. Added weight puts us at higher risk for serious health consequences such as diabetes and heart disease, and our children of being or becoming overweight.

The Cayuga County Health Department has built strong networks of community partners that promote making positive choices to eat fruits and vegetables and find fun physical activities to “promote and protect the health and well-being of the individuals, families and the community we serve”. This holiday season is a great time to continue making progress toward our health goals, now and throughout the New Year. So, let’s partner with each other and not let our healthy habits slide. For a happy season, supporting your overall health is a priority. Below are some common sense “survival” tips for this celebratory month of December:

The Holiday Party

- You don’t have to go to the party already full, but you don’t have to be famished either. Have a piece of fruit or a glass of milk to take the edge off hunger and help limit trips to the buffet.
- Find a comfortable conversation spot that is not located near the food table. Remember, the party is not only about the food, but is also about sharing quality time with friends.
- Plan for small indulgences, such as cheesecake or eggnog, but adjust your intake of calories accordingly.

The Work Place

- The employee break room may not be the best place for you to practice your will power, when at work.
- Bake healthy treats for your colleagues don't sabotage their efforts to eat sensibly.
- Weather permitting, a brief walk during your lunch hour could benefit you physically as well as provide some mental downtime.
- Find exercises that can be done at your desk

Your Home

- Go outside and start a new family tradition for the holiday. Take the kids sledding or ice-skating, try out the snow shoes you received last year, or go for a family walk.
- Stay in-doors and take the family roller-skating. Did you know that in just one hour of moderate roller-skating you could burn 330 calories on a 143-pound person?
- Throw away your mistakes - the chipped cookies, a pastry that doesn't look quite right, etc...instead of eating them!
- Out of sight, out of mind! Leave fruit and vegetable snacks within sight and send other foods back to the refrigerator, pantry, or cabinet.

Whether you are enjoying time with the family at home, or you are at work food moves to center stage throughout the holiday. Remember moderation and balance is key. If you eat because you are stressed, know that eating will not relieve your holiday stress. You'll only be more stressed when you realize you ate more than you should have. Watch your portion size and try not to overindulge. If you do overindulge, tomorrow will provide another chance to try again.

An ounce of prevention, and planning ahead may make the holiday weight challenge easier to meet. Let's assist and support each other in developing practices that will improve the health and fitness of our children and families during this season. Aim to eat

a healthier diet, and get more exercise to control weight. For nutritional information and easy, healthy recipes, visit www.cce.cornell.edu/cayuga, www.nutrition.gov.