

STAYING TRIM THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS, IS IT POSSIBLE?

by Dr. Suzanne Swearengen

Many of us look forward to the holiday season: a time to reflect on times past, hold gratitude for the good in life, celebrate with loved ones and perhaps join in the feeding frenzy of delectable holiday goodies. However, this wonderful time of year can also be stressful. We have so many obligations and engagements that lead to a hectic schedule and emotion-based eating habits. We're easily lured into consuming high-calorie foods and beverages when the emotions come into play. For all of us, it's natural to find ways to justify the extra cookie or latte—a reward that comforts us. We may struggle with emotional eating year round, but during the holidays, we're faced with special temptation. This almost inevitably leads to a few extra pounds for the New Year's weight-loss resolution. But, fear not—there's hope.

The obvious rule of thumb is to avoid overindulgence. Too much of a good thing is a bad thing. No matter how good it tastes going down, you are surely going to pay for it later. Make conscious choices about what you consume to maintain balance in your diet, and search for nutrition among the treats. Here's an example: At a holiday gathering, consider the oatmeal or ginger cookies over the frosted sugar cookies. They all contain sugar and fat, but oatmeal and ginger actually offer some benefits to the body. Choose a plain slice of turkey over grandma's delectable sugar-cured pineap-

ple crowned ham. The turkey is likely lower in sugar, fat and salt. And try to stay true to your normal eating habits when you're not at a function or party. Taunting platters of goodies at home or in the workplace challenge your resolve because they're not normally available so conveniently in that environment. When you constantly nibble from these goodie platters, you won't realize how much you've consumed over time. Find substitutes such as popcorn, almonds, cashews, grapes and berries that are delicious and have nutritional. For extra discipline, keeping track of what you eat with a food journal will help you survive the holidays without stretching your waistline.

Of course, with best intentions, there still will be times when you're caught up in the spirit of the festivities, overindulge and pay the price. Bloating, gas, acid reflux and other discomforts are the reward. There are plenty of natural solutions for everything from the occasional upset stomach to problems related to more chronic conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome or gastroesophageal reflux disease. For most any kind of digestive issue, aloe vera juice is beneficial. It soothes the digestive tract, relieves inflammation and moistens the intestines. (One quarter to one half cup is recommended two to three times daily until symptoms are relieved.) Ginger tea is another simple remedy for nausea, vomiting or upset stomach. (Sip 1-2 cups hot or cool tea, depending on preference.) Peppermint is beneficial for indigestion, gas and overeating; best taken as a tea or an enteric-coated capsule. The homeopathic remedy nux vomica is also effective for a variety of digestive problems. Most grocery stores and health food stores should have these natural remedies available.

You might also consider whole body purification after the holidays to help reverse the effects of accumulated toxins and start over with a clean slate. It's best to go about this with the guidance of a qualified healthcare professional and to avoid fad "detox" diets that might be harmful. A professional can also help guide and support your plan to avoid old habits and keep from regaining lost weight. No matter how you enjoy the holidays, keep in mind these trim tips to help stay on your health track into the New Year.

Have a safe and happy holiday season!

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