

- FACT SHEET -

Winter Weight Loss Strategies
www.milhamdietitians.com

Many people trying to control their weight often find the biggest challenges to be during the colder months and the festive season. Often, weight gain results during these times. When it is time for new year resolutions to be made, or for warmer weather clothes to come out of mothballs, many people realize that they have gained a few kilos.

Spring and the new year are often the times when people start new diets to shed the extra weight they have put on. It is better to learn to manage your weight during these difficult times of the year, rather than, year in, year out, try to undo the damage.

If you are trying to lose or control your weight, you will need to learn how to stay motivated over the winter months. With cold weather ahead of us, we need to consider a number of factors which may change and ultimately effect our progress if we do not deal with them in the most appropriate way. These factors include our state of mind, the temperature, our dietary intake and our exercise level.

State of mind

Many people feel more depressed in winter, as it is dark more hours of the day and often wet and cold outdoors. As a result many of us stay inside more often and socialise less. This may influence eating and exercise habits. If you feel depressed, aim to do things that cheer you up, a hot bubble bath, a lengthy chat on the phone or a cupboard clean out might do the trick. What wouldn't or can't you do in summer that you can do now? Perhaps redecorate the house, put those photos in some albums or learn to cook new, tasty, healthy casseroles or soups. Make the most of winter!

Temperature

As the cold weather approaches, our body temperature may drop unless we aim to increase it. Be careful that you do not get cold as being cold can trigger the appetite. Try to stay warm by wearing extra clothes or a spencer, having a warm drink, a hot bath or turning the heater on.

*Look ahead, and think positive.
Look towards tomorrow, but enjoy today.
Each day is a new day, (even each minute is a new minute),
a chance to be one step closer to your goal.
Each day you choose to delay,
is one day less you will not live to your fullest potential.*

Body Awareness

Many people have less awareness of their body when they wear more clothes. In winter the body is often under “wraps” and what we don’t see we may forget about. Exercise helps us stay aware, as does looking in the mirror now and then or trying on some firm fitting clothes. Try to stay aware of the body and of the desire to lose weight, then when spring is upon us, you can break out of your winter cocoon like a butterfly with a new slimmer silhouette. Also try not to wear baggy clothes like old tracksuits too often in winter as this does not help with body awareness.

Diet

We often eat differently in winter. Salads and some fruits may be out of season and/or not as appealing. The smell of pies, pastries and hot chips may lure you to temptation in shopping malls or your office/home, if others close to you are eating them. Be prepared. Avoid temptation if you can, and have some alternative, appealing, healthier options available.

Some menu alternatives are outlined on the next page, which may be more appropriate for the colder months. You may like to vary your menu plans accordingly, and use some of the following ideas.

Some menu alternatives

Breakfast

You may like to try alternative breakfasts. Try a hot cereal like porridge or heat up some milk to pour onto your cereal. Maybe even choose toast and grill some cheese and tomato on top or have an egg or baked bean or fish in tomato sauce on toast, crumpets or muffins at breakfast time.

Lunches

Try toasted sandwiches and possibly, include soups. For example, have a low kilojoule packet or tinned soup at lunchtime or better still, heat up some homemade free vegetable soup and include this as well as a sandwich. You may like to try baked beans or eggs on toast as a warm alternative.

Depending on your circumstances, you may like to have a baked potato with a filling such as grated cheese, cottage cheese and salad or baked beans. You may like to reheat your pasta or rice from the night before and have with a vegetable or tomato based sauce and top with grated cheese.

Main Meal

Aim to increase hot, filling, high fibre nutritious foods. Have lots of free vegetables in soups, casseroles, curries, chillies and spaghetti sauce dishes. Cook in bulk and have regular cooking marathons and freeze ahead of time and reheat when required. This way if you have a busy day, all you need to do when you arrive home hungry, is to defrost and warm up a 'ready' meal.

Desserts

You may like to try hot custards or rice pudding (using skim milk and sweetener of course) or stewed or baked fruits.

Exercise

You may need to modify your exercise program to suit the dark, cooler, wet days ahead. Darkness, rain and cold temperatures can influence our choice of exercise or even discourage us from exercising at all.

How to manage exercise in winter

Walking alone or exercising alone outdoors in the dark may not be an appealing or appropriate option. You may like to consider another person, family member, neighbour or even a dog to exercise with you or you may decide to exercise during day light hours.

You may choose another option and exercise at home, possibly at night time, if you work during the day. Consider using an exercise machine like a treadmill, an exercise bike or a stairmaster. You can often ride these machines while participating in another activity, like watching TV, listening to music or reading a book. It is a good idea to hire one of these machines first and then possibly buy one later. This way if it doesn't suit you, you don't waste your money.

Another alternative would be to buy or borrow exercise videos, and play these at a time that suits you. You may like to tape an aerobic exercise program that may be on television if you don't feel like doing the exercise session at that hour.

Another alternative would be to choose to go out and exercise indoors at an exercise venue such as a fitness centre or a swimming pool.

If you enjoy exercising outdoors in winter, you may still be able to walk, cycle or do other activities outdoors on the weekend, during day light hours, when the weather is good (particularly if you work).

Most importantly, consider having a flexible, varied exercise program throughout the year. It needs to be flexible in that you have many options and fall back plans. It also needs to be varied so that you reduce your risk of boredom, your risk of injury and you increase the effectiveness of the exercise by using many different muscle groups.