

Silly Season Slimming Tips

Enjoy Christmas without the weight gain!

Stop the annual seasonal yoyo syndrome and still enjoy Christmas!

Many people trying to control their weight often find one of the biggest challenges to be the festive season and there are many reasons that account for this. The New Year is then often a time when people start a new diet to shed the extra weight they have put on. It is better to learn how to manage your weight during this difficult time, rather than, year in, year out, trying to undo the damage.

It's not just what you eat on Christmas day that does the damage. The average person puts on around 3 kilograms during the festive and holiday season, starting from mid-November and finishing at the end of January.

You can prevent weight gain and maybe even lose, without becoming a social recluse or depriving your taste buds, if you follow the tips in this article.

Can you relate to the following scenario?

You're at a party that started at 7pm. You wanted to 'save yourself,' so you arrive hungry and find 'finger foods' everywhere and everyone eating. Foods and drinks are offered to you. You feel hungry and don't want to be different or feel deprived and want to join in. "After all, it's Christmas!"

After a couple of drinks you tell yourself, "Well it's free/all laid on/or I've paid for it I might as well enjoy it". You stand by the supper table and graze on the closest snacks as you're chatting with another person who's also doing the same thing. You're drinking and finish off the bowl of nuts together. "Oh well, I'll diet in the New Year." you say to yourself.

How many 'triggers' or influences are operating here to encourage you to overdo it?? There are many. We are bombarded by triggers in situations like these and others, that add up to create a powerful urge or force to overeat. You need to learn how to manage them and be in control...

Now we will attack them one at a time...

Prioritize extras/indulgences

Save up your 'extras' or 'indulgences' for special occasions like parties and Christmas day, if you can, particularly if you feel you are going to indulge in either a high fat takeaway or menu choice, dessert, cake or alcohol. Try not to have them every day and eat sensibly between these social occasions.

Managing Eating Out

Whether you are grabbing a takeaway, attending a party or bbq or eating out at a friend's house or restaurant, you need to know how to make the wisest choices.

Apart from the tips below, you can also refer to the hints in the Chooz to looz Eating Out Guide and/ or, talk with your dietitian further during your clinic or Skype/phone consultations, about managing particular situations that you may come across.

When eating out at people's places or going to parties, be prepared and plan options to take with you. You may want to bring a plate of healthy foods to help 'space out' the indulgent foods. For example, a fruit platter, a platter filled with 'free' vegetables with a low fat dip (or cheese) and crackers or low fat, low sugar, healthy cakes or muffins or a low fat cheesecake. This way you will be less inclined to want the high kilojoule temptations.

When eating out, aim to apply the general principles of healthy eating and losing weight i.e. aim to eat low fat, high fibre, low sugar foods

Try to be careful with your selection of foods:

- Choose protein foods that have a lower fat content e.g. fish, chicken, veal, lean beef and pork.
- Ask for salads with dressing served separately. If this is not possible, then choose those salads which appear to have fewer dressings
- Take care with alcohol and choose low kilojoule (calorie) drinks in preference to fruit juice.
- Avoid dishes with 'heavy' sauces (especially butter, cream or cheese)

Controlling Hunger

Don't go hungry. Take the edge off your appetite before you leave the house by having a healthy snack like a piece of fruit, healthy Christmas cake, a few crackers or a bowl of salad or vegetable soup.

Forward Planning

Plan your eating beforehand (if possible), so that you may 'save up your kilojoules' or your weekly indulgences (or Extras)* allowance, for your meal out. This is especially important if you plan to indulge in a high kilojoule dessert, alcohol, a larger meal than usual, or a high fat menu choice.

Avoiding Common Traps

Beware of the common traps:

- Try to be aware of how much and what you are eating.
- Don't accept seconds (except low kilojoule salads or vegetables).
- Don't eat all the cream or butter sauces, greasy gravies, or melted butter which may be on your plate. Enjoy a little and leave a lot.
- Garlic bread is like a 'butter sponge'. Don't order it. If it is on the table push it firmly to the other side.
- Enjoy the meal AND the company. If at a social gathering, try not to position yourself next to 'high risk' foods if you can help it. Find someone interesting to talk to instead.

Managing alcohol

If alcohol is one of those little luxuries that you like to indulge in, perhaps even more so at this time of the year, then you will be happy to know that you don't have to give it up.

The hints that follow will help you make a 'little' go a long way and assist you with not drinking excessively.

Sip your drinks slowly. If you have a reasonably full glass in your hand, people will usually not pester you to have more drinks.

If you are eating out, ask for a jug of water at your table and drink at least one glass of water to one alcoholic beverage.

Keep count! If you are socializing, then your hand over your glass is a simple way of indicating 'no'. Remember, alcohol stimulates the appetite and depresses good resolutions, so be wary! If having a few glasses means you then eat a lot more of the high kilojoule foods without the extra alcohol, then be very wary. The extra calories from the extra food may end up being more than the alcohol itself!

Try extending your drinks. Instead of wine, have half and half with water, soda or mineral water (NOTE: if you dilute your drink by extending it, 2 glasses of wine could become 4 glasses of half wine, half soda). Also order or have 'half nips' of spirits and mix with low joule mixtures, like low kilojoule cola or soda.

If you drink beer, choose 'LA' or 'lite' beer instead of standard beer and if you like a cocktail, choose the 'lower kilojoule' varieties and try not to have any more than a few. A few of the best include: a Dry Martini, Margarita, Bloody Mary, a Screwdriver or a Negroni.

To reduce your overall weekly consumption over the festive season, reduce the frequency with which you drink alcohol. Determine which days are more important that you drink and which days are not. Perhaps try to have a few A.F.D's (i.e. Alcohol Free Days) throughout the week, where you drink no alcohol. It may be easier to do this on days that you are not socializing or during the week and save your alcohol for certain social events/dinners or parties that you have scheduled or for the weekend. Also, many people find that a few(1 or 2) can lead to many more, so if you can't stop once you start, plan to start less often, maybe drink on 1 or 2 days a week only.

Ask yourself why do you drink? If you drink alcohol as a way to reduce stress, look at other ways you can manage this. Sometimes at Christmas time we are presented with more/different situations that can create stress/ anxiety for us like catchups with certain relatives, social or work contacts. If you feel stressed/ anxious in particular social situations and/or with certain people, consider instead of drinking, going for a walk around the block, relaxing in a bubble bath, listening to some soothing music, or reading a favorite book or magazine either before the anticipated event/social contact and/or after it.

If socializing with friends often means that alcohol is involved, perhaps look at other activities you could share together with your friends that do not involve drinking.

Managing presents

Receiving gifts

Ideally request alternative gifts to food gifts like chocolates or biscuits if you can, before you are given them.

However, if you receive them, either:

- eat them slowly over a period of time
- give them away or ‘re-gift’ them, OR
- open them when several others are around and share them around so everyone eats them with you, and then give away the leftovers, if any.

Don’t feel guilty about the choice you make. Chocolates, for example, are an easy option for many people to buy particularly if on special, but if you’ve got diabetes or people know you’re watching your weight or trying to eat healthier, most people should know that chocolates aren’t the ideal gift.

Giving presents

Do you ever eat the gifts you have purchased for others? Some of my clients’ gifts never see the wrapping paper. If this is you, buy no tempting gifts or if you must, purchase at the latest possible time, wrap them immediately and store out of sight.

Managing holidays

Be careful with more time on your hands that you don’t spend this time eating ...

So Keep temptations...

“Out of sight, out of house, Out of mind and out of mouth”.

Holidays are often an ‘unstructured’ time. If we have been used to working or studying and eating at regular hours, then this extra free time and having less of a routine can often be a problem.

Try to create structure in your day with your activities and keep busy. If you feel bored, then have other activities or hobbies that you enjoy around you that you can pursue when the time arises so eating doesn’t become your hobby. Aim to keep to regular meals so you don’t become over hungry and then make unwise choices or eat excessively. Also

limit time spent in the kitchen especially in-between meals, if this increases the chance that you will snack.

When planning a holiday away, ideally organize your own catering and make your own food choices. It is always more difficult if you are relying on someone else's cooking or catering. However, if you are staying with friends talk with them beforehand to get their support. Being prepared and organized and planning your food ahead as much as you can will increase your chances that you can enjoy the holiday without dreading your weigh in upon your return!

Managing extra food in the house

Limit temptations otherwise you risk overindulging. Typical Christmas foods such as mince pies, Christmas puddings and cakes, nuts, lollies, shortbread biscuits and chocolate should be restricted, particularly if you think you may lose control. If you have to get them in for other family members, get them at the latest possible time, store them out of site and if there are leftovers after the big day, possibly give them away, if you find them too tempting.

Ideally, it is best if you get support from other family members so that you can limit particular food choices if too tempting. Only you know yourself best. Even if they are 'on special' it is not a saving if they end up on your waist.

Remember... Better waste than waist!

Christmas day

There is only one Christmas day and you want to make sure you enjoy it. You may be having Christmas at home or out at someone's house or a restaurant.

At Home

If you're catering at home for Christmas, you could prepare a tasty, healthy, low fat cold or hot lunch/ dinner - or both. Many people like cold seafood and salad for lunch, rather than a roast dinner, or BBQ, especially if the weather forecast is for hot weather. At home the advantage is that you are in control of the menu but the disadvantage is that you will potentially be surrounded by temptation for a longer period of time.

Limit high kilojoule snack foods that may tempt you in the house, but if you need to get them in for others, get them at the latest possible time, and if there are any left, give away the leftovers after the big day. This includes mince pies, crisps, shortbread biscuits, chocolates and Christmas cake. Remember too, too much of a good thing can also be

fattening so go easy on nuts, leftover ham etc. If however, on the big day you want some Christmas pudding, a few chocolates and a mince pie, go ahead, have a small serve, eat slowly and enjoy it.

For snacks, have some low fat dips with crackers and vegetable sticks, fruit platters, pretzels, nuts, low sugar, low fat Christmas cake(see recipe at the end of this book) and for the sweet tooth have a healthy dessert or cake from The Australian Healthy Cooking Guide like ‘Very, berry cheesecake.’

Out

If out at a friends or relatives house offer to take some foods/ drinks and then take some healthy options. If the menu there doesn’t include many lower kilojoule options, be selective with what is available and control the amounts you eat, particularly with the higher kilojoule options. Sit next to controlled eaters at the table particularly if you know you are influenced by large eaters, to do the same. We are all social animals and can be inclined to follow what those do around us. Eat slowly and stay in touch with how much you are eating.

Maximize Motivation

Many people know exactly how to choose the best choices. They have the correct knowledge but they lack the motivation (or the will power) to carry it through. They get carried away with the moment and before they know it they have overeaten. You may find yourself more tempted than usual with more variety, quantity and availability of foods over the Christmas- New Year break so it is best to be prepared beforehand.

Review often your list of reasons for wanting to eat healthier and/ or, lose weight, to keep your motivation strong. If you think you may weaken, review these reasons before attending a party/ dinner where you may be tempted.

Maximize your ‘Willpower’ and ‘mind power’

When temptation is only an arm’s length away don’t just say “I know I shouldn’t but I will.” Instead, follow this 4 - step process...

1. **Do I really want those empty kilojoules?** Before eating a tempting food, run through your prepared list of reasons for losing weight .Compare the immediate, temporary short term pleasure of the food with the ultimate, long term

enjoyment of the achievement of your desirable weight and what you can do or wear when you get there. Ask yourself, “Do I really want those empty kilojoules now, more than I want to wear shorts (or bathers) this summer?” Ideas repeated over and over can have as much effect as those which have been planted while in a hypnotic trance.

2. **‘A second on the lips...a lifetime on the hips’** Remember this slogan. Is a few seconds of pleasure worth the long term consequences?
3. **Taste it with your mind** If you have eaten and enjoyed this food before, you can enjoy it again! Now, close your eyes and imagine the taste of the food without actually eating it. Our taste buds have a memory too... Now that was nice, wasn't it and it didn't even cost a calorie. Now ask yourself, if you did choose to consume this particular food how would you feel afterwards? A little guilty? Bloating? Now think how you would feel if you choose not to eat it! Great, strong, IN CONTROL! The more you learn to control food (than food controlling you) the easier it will be to say “no” with no remorse.
4. **Eat like a gourmet** If after going through the above three steps, you still want that particular food, fine, eat (or drink) a little, slowly, and enjoy. Maybe a half slice, a slither, handful or even a mouthful is enough. After one mouthful, the rest tastes the same anyway so why rush? The longer food stays in our mouth, the more enjoyment we get. Once we swallow it, it is gone - we don't have taste buds in our throat or stomach. So, eat less, slowly and enjoy more.

“It is not just the mouthfuls in our life;
It is the life in our mouthfuls!”

Managing people

Whether you are attending a party or bbq, or eating out at a friend's house or restaurant, you need to also know (or learn) how to ‘manage people who may influence your choices’. It is important to know how to manage people who offer us food that we really don't want to eat but at the same time, we not hurt their feelings. We also need to know how to ask for positive support from our family and those close to us.

Apart from the tips below, you can also refer to the Chooz to looz Managing People Guide for more information and tips that covers many aspects and/ or talk with your dietitian further about managing your particular situations that you may come across.

Many special occasions are centered around food and feasting, and Christmas is one of them because it is quite unconsciously recognized by all as the symbol of love, welcome, friendship and caring. If you refuse food that is offered to you, in a way that upsets the person offering, you may feel guilty and mean. There are methods to cope with this situation without consuming what you do not wish to, or offending the other person.

There are three ways to deal with food and drink offers. Which one you choose is up to you, the person who is offering and the particular situation. You will need to understand the different options available to you before you can decide which approach is best. The approach you use in one situation may vary from the next. You have to be the judge and ‘weigh up:’

1. How you feel and what you want
2. How well you know the other person and what type of person they
3. The particular social situation that you are involved in.

The first option is to be assertive by accepting the affection of the person offering, but then refusing the food offer, for example: By saying “Thank you for thinking of me.....but.....” or “That’s kind of you.....but.....no thank you, I couldn’t fit in another bite.”

Then ‘redirect’ their affection so that they can still ‘give you something.’ Show them something you are willing to accept from them, for example: “I will have a glass of water or a diet coke with you” or “I’d love a cup of tea, but nothing to eat thank you.” If somebody is in the habit of bringing you chocolates, or cake, suggest they bring you instead some of your favorite luxury fruits of the season, like mangoes, a bunch of flowers or a book. Alternatively, you may prefer that they do something special for you. For example, they could cook you dinner or give you a massage.

The second option is to use ‘escape techniques’. If you feel emotionally that you really want to accept the food or drink as you will hurt the other person’s feelings offering, then there are ways of accepting but then ‘disposing’ of the food or drink. This option is often easiest when the particular social situation allows for you to accept but not be ‘watched closely’ afterwards. The following scenarios are three examples which will give you a few ideas.

1. After a BBQ, you are offered dessert. Ask the hostess/ host to “save it” for you in the fridge for later, as “I couldn’t fit another mouth full in just now.” For you, later never comes and the dessert is forgotten.
2. You are offered afternoon tea, a piece of Christmas cake at a friend’s house. Explain to your friend that you have just eaten out, or had a large lunch or feel a

little unwell just now, but, would love to take it home and have it for supper. For you, you can offer it to a slim friend or family member later, feed it to the birds or toss it in the bin.

3. You are at a party and supper is served, and all that is available is pastries, cakes and biscuits. You are not hungry .Everyone is eating. You are offered cake by the hostess who explains in a lot of detail how long it took her to make them and how delicious they are. You decide to take one or two, but walk on and put the plate (still with the cakes on it) down somewhere or offer your cakes to your friend/partner, or pop them into the bin later. No one will notice, everyone is happy and you have not eaten what you didn't want!

The third option is to accept the offer. If you desire a particular food or drink for whatever reason, then you can choose a small serve. Alternatively, if you feel emotionally that you want to accept the food or drink as you would hurt the persons feelings who is offering, and you cannot 'escape', then accept a small serve. Let's say your great aunt who you see once a year has baked your favorite sponge for your birthday, offers you a slice at afternoon tea, for example, accept a slice graciously and enjoy.