

- FACT SHEET -

How to manage Easter and holidays and not gain weight!

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Managing Easter

It's that time of the year again, hot cross buns and easter eggs are in the shops, people are planning school holidays and going away, often camping.

For so many people, chocolate is a passion which must be controlled, particularly if they are trying to lose or control their weight. With the Easter weekend ahead of us, chocolate lovers are going to be challenged with temptations, not only during the Easter break, but before and after. Chocolate easter eggs are out in shops weeks ahead, not to mention hot cross buns. For many people trying to control their weight this is one of those difficult times of the year where they may choose to give up their weight loss program or their healthy eating, particularly if they splurge over the coming weekend, or weeks ahead.

Managing presents

If you are **purchasing chocolate easter eggs for others**, get them at the latest possible time and store them away out of sight. As the saying goes, "out of sight, out of mind". For many chocolate lovers, the lure of the easter eggs may prove too much. Many people including some of my clients, have eaten the presents prior to easter and end up having to purchase more for gifts.

The other alternative is to purchase presents other than easter eggs for your friends and family, for example fluffy bunnies, perfume, or a fresh fruit basket.

If you usually **get given chocolate gifts**, request ideally that other alternative presents to chocolates can be given, in advance of time.

If however, you are given chocolates as gifts, either store them away and save them as the occasional weekly indulgence (if you can), and then consume them slowly, savouring your taste.

If you are a chocolate lover, get (or ask for) the best, in small servings and eat slowly. You may like to even consider freezing your chocolate because this way, it takes longer to eat, you get more enjoyment and it lasts longer. Another alternative is to ask for good quality dark chocolate eg. 70 or 80% cocoa. Many people are satisfied with less this way, resulting in less kilojoules consumed.

If you can't stop once you start, give them away, or open them when several other people are present and offer that everyone consumes them with you and then, give away the leftovers.

Managing extra chocolate in the house

For many people it is not their chocolate gifts that prove the problem, it's eating others' chocolates. So if your children have easter eggs by the bucket load, this can be a temptation. Ideally, suggest to others that other gifts can be given to your children (it's better for them anyway) and limit how much chocolate they are given. Next, see if they can keep them in their room, if they are old enough, or put them out of 'sight out of mind' high up in the pantry if they are younger, and distribute on an occasional basis.

Managing holidays

Many people go away over Easter for camping, or on another holiday, or if it's not Easter, it's in the school holidays that directly follow.

The ideal situation is that you organise your own catering and make your own food choices. It is more difficult if you are relying on someone else cooking or catering. However, if you know your hosts well, try to talk to them beforehand. Be prepared and plan your food ahead and be organised if you can.

Be careful with more time on your hands that you don't spend this time eating. Keep temptations 'out of sight, out of house, out of mind, out of mouth'.

Holidays are often an unstructured time. If we have been used to working and eating at regular hours, then this extra free time can sometimes be a problem, particularly if you eat when bored. Try to keep structure in your day, keep busy and try not to spend more time in the kitchen. Still aim to stick to regular meals even if you don't have to. Have other hobbies or activities surrounding you so that if you feel bored, you can pursue them when the time arises.

Hot cross buns

It's not as much the hot cross bun that is the problem, it's what you put on it. People who enjoy lashings of butter and/or jam and/or cream, can easily triple the calories in their hot cross bun. Unless you get a higher fibre, no added sugar, hot cross bun it can also be a trap that you eat too many of them. So, if you can, look for unsweetened and wholemeal hot cross buns.

There are some higher fibre or wholemeal hot cross buns available in the supermarket and some health food shops. All you need on them is a thin scrape of butter or margarine, if any, or alternatively you may like to try a spread of light cream cheese with a 100%, no added sugar fruit jam. Save your hot cross bun for a snack and if you are on a weight loss program, having a hot cross bun as a mid meal snack is not a problem if you substitute it for another snack like yoghurt and fruit or crackers and cheese. Again, quantity is important, so keep count, eat slowly and enjoy.

Managing People

We need to know how to manage people who offer us chocolates (or other high kilojoule temptations) that we really don't want to consume, but at the same time, we don't want to hurt their feelings.

The first option is to **be assertive** by accepting the affection of the other person offering, but then refusing the chocolate. For example, by saying "thank you for thinking of me, 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 soda water with you" or "I would love a cup of tea". If someone habitually gives you chocolates over Easter, suggest they bring you something else instead like a favourite book, luxury fruits of the season like mangoes, a bunch of flowers or a new CD. Alternatively, you may prefer that they do something special for you, for example, 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 chocolate as you will hurt the other person's feelings, then there are several ways of accepting but then disposing of the food or drink. This option is often easiest when the particular social situation asks 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 dinner, after eating out at a friend's place, you are offered Easter eggs. Ask the hostess to save them for you for later as you couldn't fit in another bite just now. For you, later never comes and the chocolate is forgotten.
2. You are offered chocolate at a friend's house. Explain to your friend that you have just eaten out, have 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 either take it and put it in the bin when you get home, or offer it to a friend or family member.
3. You are again, in a social situation and easter eggs are being handed out -you are not hungry and do not want to have one at this stage, but everyone else is eating them. The hostess offers you an easter egg. You decide to take one, but then walk on and give the easter egg to someone else, or put it down somewhere. No one will notice, everyone is happy, and you have not eaten what you didn't want.