

You Don't Have to Be a Weight Gain Casualty This Holiday Season

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The holiday season, lauded by many as a favorite time of year, has gained the notoriety of being associated with the dreaded words – weight gain! The season's many celebrations, annual events, and family gatherings tend to revolve around food and beloved family recipes. The increase in social activities coupled with the demands of extra errands and shopping can sidetrack regular routines and sabotage intentions to exercise. So, it is not surprising why “needing to lose weight” becomes a New Year's mantra for many. However, take heart, with some goal setting and planning you **can** get through this time without having to peruse the clothing sales in the New Year.



The simple fact is we do not need to put on gym clothes and pry ourselves away from whatever we are doing to exercise. Making a habit of integrating exercise into our daily routines in small and big ways ensures our success and helps to diminish chances of recidivism. The American Heart Association recommendation of moderate intensity exercise for at least 30 minutes per day, five days a week, will help maintain a person's weight. Additional minutes of exercise can help reduce weight. However, we can easily break the 30 minutes into more manageable increments of 2-15 minute intervals or 3 -10 minute intervals which fit nicely in to the work day.

How do you know if the activity that you are performing can be counted as moderate exercise? Take the talk test. You should be able to carry on a conversation but not sing. Also, you should feel a light sweat and a rise in your heart rate. As with any exercise program be sure to check with your physician before starting, especially if you have not exercised in some time.

Try adding some of these ideas into your daily routines and get creative:

- Going to the mall after work or on errands? Leave a pair of comfortable shoes in your car so you can do a few laps around the mall or parking lot before shopping.
- Start using a smaller water bottle or cup to so that you have to get up more often to refill it. Use that time to do a lap around the building.
- Doing a holiday get together with friends after work? Instead of just meeting at the restaurant, take a 20 -30 minute walk around the area before eating.
- What about an ice skating, roller skating, 5K run, or bowling get together?
- Waiting for dinner to come out of the oven? Put on the holiday music and dance – a great aerobic activity which allows you to burn calories and have fun at the same time!
- Jumping rope burns more calories than running. So keep a jump rope nearby and catch a few minutes here and there.
- Standing in line at a checkout? Do some abdominal crunches, Just draw in your abdominal muscles, tighten and hold for a few seconds, then do the same with the other

muscle groups in your body for a total isometric work out which helps tone muscles.

- Fire off 10 minutes of running in place while watching TV.
- Make it a regular habit at lunchtime to take to the stairs for a few minutes. You can easily turn out 15 minutes of moderate to intense exercise without leaving the building.

For more ideas, check out the **Getting Started** and **Walking Program** sections of the HR Wellness web site, which can be found at

<http://www.fcps.edu/DHR/employees/benefits/wellness/index.htm>.

In addition, having a visual way to track how many minutes a day you are exercising can help to stay on track. Download Everyday Health's exercise log at:

http://images.agoramedia.com/EverydayHealth/cms/pdf/eh_FitnessLog_LetterSize_01.pdf

Other Tips

Our emotions can be a big factor in influencing what we eat, how much and when we eat, especially during this time of year. If you think you are doing a lot of "emotional eating," check out the Mayo Clinic articles *Weight Loss: How to stop emotional eating* (<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/weight-loss/MH00025>) and *Eating Habits; to lose weight, explore why you overeat* (<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/eating-habits/WT00022>) for some coping strategies.

You can also go to the HR Wellness web site to get more ideas on deep breathing and stress relief strategies for relaxation. Now that you are exercising and relaxed, make sure to visit some of the following web site sites to select some healthy meals for your family gatherings:

- <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/healthy-recipes/RE99999> (Mayo Clinic)
- <http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/forum.asp?articlekey=58590&articletype=expert%20%20%20%20> (Web MD)
- <http://www.deliciousdecisions.org/> (American Heart Association)

Finally, even if you have not joined the FCPS Maintain, Don't Gain fitness challenge, you can still log on to the HR Wellness web site and check out more strategies to help you maintain, not gain weight this holiday season.

Best wishes for a healthy holiday season from HR Wellness!