

CONTACT: Sarah Purcell, Extension Educator

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PHONE: 402-269-2301

Holiday Weight Gain

Holidays are celebrated with family, friends, and food. During the holidays, many people struggle with maintaining their weight.

It's easy to munch on delicious holiday treats throughout the day or to eat too much at a holiday meal, but those extras can add up quickly calorie-wise.

Look at how the calories can add up from one day's extra tastes: a broken cookie from the cookie sheet - 30 calories, a small piece of peanut brittle - 80 calories, a half cup of eggnog - 200 calories, a cracker with spread - 40 calories, and one chocolate-covered cherry - 60 calories.

Those tastes equal 410 calories. These are just approximations and can vary depending on the brand, recipe, and serving size, yet they show that the holiday extras do add up.

Eating 100 calories more than necessary each day can result in gaining 10 pounds in one year. This doesn't mean going without the holiday goodies; it means being conscious about eating decisions.

Here are some ways to eat carefully and still enjoy the season.

- Offer several lower calorie foods at holiday gatherings. This will help balance out higher calorie choices.

- Avoid hanging out near the snack table. It's harder to resist grabbing more to eat when the food is in reach.

- Provide whole grain crackers, nuts, low fat veggie dip, non-alcoholic beverages and smaller plates if hosting a party.

- Limit the amount of foods to "indulge" in. Try just one cookie. Self-serve a reasonable amount of dip and chips, or vegetable dippers, on a plate to know how much is being eaten.

- Try just a small portion and eat slowly. Some foods taste better when time is given to truly taste them.

- Watch the gravy, butter, and desserts and make sure to eat bigger portions of healthier items, like lean meats and vegetables.

- When preparing food, try to lighten up the recipes with lighter, healthier varieties, for example serving steamed vegetables without adding sauces and butter.

-Take less food when it's served. Even though you might think you need more food, you may find out that's not the case. Have a second helping if it is.

- Include daily physical activity to help keep excess holiday pounds off. If there's not enough time to take a walk outside, complete a couple of laps around the mall before starting to shop. Just be active throughout the holidays and winter season.

As long as the holidays aren't food-centered and healthy eating choices are made, maintaining your weight won't be an issue.

Sarah Purcell is a Nebraska Extension Educator for Otoe County and Southeast Nebraska. She can be reached at 402-269-2301 or via email at spurcell2@unl.edu.

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