

# HealthNotes Vol IV

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## Tips to Avoid Holiday Overindulgence

Yes, it's that time of year again when even the most health conscious among us sigh when they step on the scales. Whatever your religious affiliation, 'tis the season for feasts and sweets, cocktails and eggnogs, and all these rich foods can take their toll on your waistline. Add to this seasonal caloric avalanche the fact that the short daylight hours make it harder to find the time to get out and be active, and it's little wonder that millions of Americans are ready to make New Year's health resolutions.

But the holidays don't have to mark the end of your healthy year or begin your slide into obesity. A few simple tips can help keep your inevitable overindulgences manageable.

**First-** Don't guilt out if you overeat a little at Thanksgiving or Christmas Eve. It's OK to overindulge on occasion in this season. One large meal or too many cookies once won't ruin your health\*it's when that becomes habitual that problems appear. If you overeat, roll with it, and promise to make it up to yourself by more carefully managing intake at the next meal, or by getting some extra activity in. Don't say, "I've failed" and stop thinking about the calories you're consuming.

**Second-** Remain active! Exercising before a big dinner can kick up your metabolism a bit, and will tend to suppress your appetite. And activity is a key part of the whole energy equation that controls weight gain/loss. Keeping active during the holidays, whether it's a brisk walk or a session at the gym or even getting out for some early season skiing will help you burn off the extra calories you'll probably wind up consuming someplace.

**Third-** Don't overload your plate, and eat thoughtfully. Eating thoughtfully means really considering what you're eating\*how it feels, how it tastes, how it smells, etc. Some experts recommend chewing each bite for twenty or thirty seconds to just slow the pace of intake down, and to provide time for savoring. Think about the food you're eating and limit the rich cream, cheese, and fat based foods that taste so good but are high calories. Avoid "super-sized" portions! Take no more than a fist sized helping of whatever you're eating. And drink plenty of water to help make you feel full.

**Fourth-** Resist the call for seconds. If you eat a full plate of food, chances are good that you are full. Start helping with the clean up or something. The left over turkey will be just as good in four hours for the next meal, or the next day. You don't need to eat everything all at once.

I hope these tips help you to maintain a focus on healthy eating this holiday season\*but also give you a little room for some festive fun!

In health,

Jim Tasse