



December 19, 2018

Wellness Wednesday

Restricting Yourself from Holiday Treats Can Backfire in a Big Way

Thinking about indulging in some holiday cookies or hot cocoa? Holiday weight gain can be a source of anxiety for many people. All during a time that theoretically should be centered on joy and the sweeter things (literal and figurative) in your life.

You may think vilifying that pumpkin pie will keep you on track, but it's actually doing the opposite. Stress around food may contribute to weight gain and mental health issues, experts say. Here's what they want you to keep in mind as you navigate holiday parties, treats, dinners, drinks and more:

HOLIDAY WEIGHT GAIN IS MINIMAL

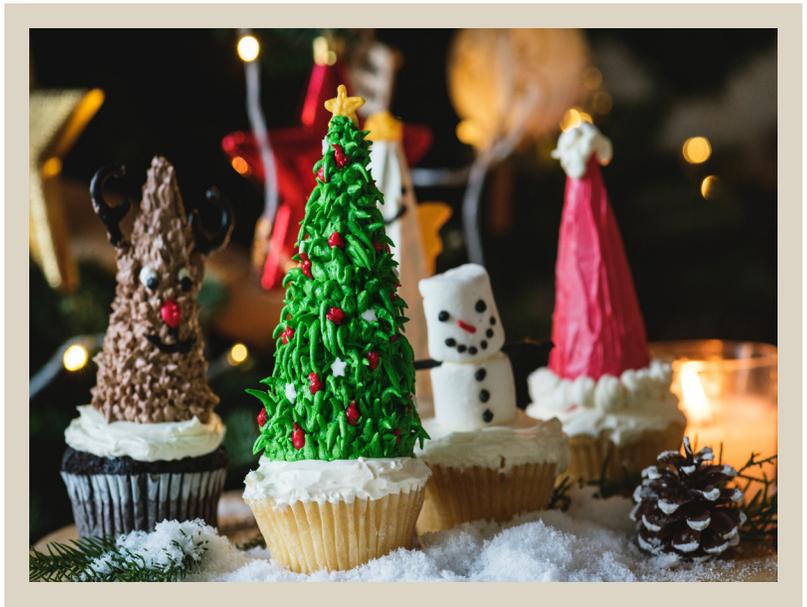
The stress around holiday weight gain often greatly outweighs the reality of the actual pounds gained. Research shows that holiday weight gain does happen, but it's very minimal. One study on college-aged adults found that holiday eating only contributed to a half a pound to two pounds of weight gain. There's a pretty good chance you might not gain anything at all.

"Provided you're maintaining the same weight regularly, and provided you go back to your normal eating after the holidays— if you mindfully indulged ... you should bounce back to your set point quickly," said Lisa Mastela, a registered dietitian based in Los Angeles.

NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF FOOD CAN HARM YOU IN THE LONG RUN

"We live in a world where we are told to 'eat this' and 'not eat that,' to label a food as good or bad and to create strict rules for ourselves," said Amy Chadwick, a licensed naturopathic doctor at Four Moons Spa in San Diego. She said the idea of eating can cause "aversion, shame, self-punishment, fear and tension in these holiday moments where food is shared." Such a relationship with food can lead to negative outcomes if left unchecked, said Autumn Bates, a certified clinical nutritionist based in Los Angeles.

"When you stress over that piece of homemade apple pie that your grandma makes each year — because you want it, but you also think it's not 'clean' or 'healthy' — it actually causes a hormonal response in your body," she said. The negative perception of holiday foods as "bad" spikes cortisol (the stress hormone), which can lead to physical health effects, including weight gain, over time.



INDULGING IN TREATS MIGHT ACTUALLY HELP YOU REACH YOUR GOALS

In the end, it might not be the skipped serving of mac and cheese that got you to your goal weight — it might be that you ate it and enjoyed it, without guilt. A study published in the *Journal of Consumer Psychology* found that “goal-deviation behaviors” (i.e., eating nondiet food on a diet) helped people self-regulate, stay motivated to meet their goals and feel positive. “This is a practice I personally follow, and one that I teach to my clients,” Bates said. Throughout the calendar year, even beyond the holidays, Bates schedules “one day a week where to treat yourself.”

But she’s careful about what she calls it. “I don’t like to use the word ‘cheat day,’ because that implies that you’re doing something wrong — cue increase in cortisol,” she said. “When it comes time to head to holiday parties, enjoy your glass of eggnog or sugar cookie and treat it as what it is — a treat,” she added.

DEPRIVING YOURSELF COULD LEAD TO OVEREATING LATER ON

If you needed more reason to order the peppermint mocha or cut into the bread pudding, consider that deprivation can lead to bingeing. “Trying to limit yourself often ends up in overindulgence,” Mastela said. “This may end up leading to guilt and shame, which can spiral. The guilt causes stress, stress causes fatigue, fatigue makes it more difficult to exercise and choose healthy foods — it’s a snowball effect.” And whatever you do, don’t punish yourself after an indulgence or “prep” for a holiday meal by starving yourself.

“Nourish yourself consistently,” Mastela said. “Restricting eating during the day will only lead to bingeing at night, and no matter how much you eat that night, you’ll still need to eat the next day.”

OTHER WAYS TO DEAL IF YOU’RE STRESSED ABOUT HOLIDAY EATING

BREATHE. “Do a five-minute deep-breathing session before dinner to center yourself and enhance the experience,” Mastela said. “Think ahead: Daydream about some of your favorite dishes you’ll encounter, and how joyful it’ll be to relax and eat them with family.”

SPACE OUT YOUR COURSES. Your brain sometimes doesn’t know it’s full until well after your meal, so Mastela advised waiting 20 minutes before going for seconds.

CHOOSE TREATS IN ADVANCE. If it’s helpful, make a mental list of the treats you’re looking forward to and select them with enthusiasm when the time comes. “Try to pre-plan as much as possible,” Jacobs said. “Pick your favorite foods, and enjoy those.”

SAVOR. Don’t just eat the food, but enjoy the whole experience. This process, also known as intuitive or mindful eating, lets you to eat what you want, slowly, and relies on listening to your body, which will tell you when you’re full. “Savor each bite and enjoy yourself,” Bates said. “Remember, the more you stress about the food you’re eating, the more your cortisol levels will spike. Take your time, analyze each bite and enjoy the flavors of the holiday season.”

Article source: <http://bit.ly/2EAHUBp>



This Week's Exercise

Diamond Sit-Up



LET'S BEGIN!

- 1. LIE ON YOUR BACK, AND OPEN YOUR LEGS INTO A DIAMOND SHAPE (AKA BUTTERFLY LEGS) WITH THE SOLES OF YOUR FEET PRESSED TOGETHER AND KNEES WIDE. EXTEND YOUR ARMS OVERHEAD.**
- 2. INHALE TO CURL YOUR TORSO UP, AND TAP THE FLOOR IN FRONT OF YOUR FEET TO STRETCH YOUR GLUTES A BIT.**
- 3. SLOWLY LOWER BACK TO THE STARTING POSITION.**
- 4. THIS COUNTS AS ONE REP.**

Source: <http://bit.ly/2EAlbWj>

Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.

GINGERBREAD HOLIDAY COOKIES



Ingredients

3 tbsp unsalted butter, softened
3/4 cup firmly packed brown sugar
1/2 cup unsweetened applesauce
1 large egg
1/3 cup dark molasses
3 cups all-purpose flour plus more for dusting
1 tsp baking soda
2 tsp ground ginger
1 tsp ground cinnamon
1/2 tsp allspice
1/4 tsp ground cloves

For the Icing:

1 1/2 tbsp egg whites, room temperature
1/4 tsp fresh lemon juice
1 cup powdered sugar
5 to 6 drops green food coloring
colored sprinkles

Directions

1. In a large mixing bowl, beat the butter, sugar and applesauce until smooth. Add the egg and molasses, mix well.
2. In another large bowl, combine flour, baking soda and spices. Add to sugar and molasses mixture, stirring well with the mixer. Use your hands to form a large ball, the dough will be a little sticky.
3. Wash and dry your hands. Place flour on your hands so the dough doesn't stick to you, then divide the dough into two flat balls; cover with plastic wrap and chill in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours.
4. After the dough has chilled 2 hours, preheat the oven to 350°F. Generously dust the surface of your working area with flour before rolling out the dough. Work with one ball of dough at a time, keep the other refrigerated while you do so.
5. Depending on how thin you roll the dough out and the size of your trees, makes at least 60 tree cookies.
6. Roll the dough out to 1/8-inch thickness, sprinkle a little flour on top of the dough if it's a little sticky. Trim the uneven edges off to square the dough, then using a knife cut the dough into 3 1/2 inch strips. Then cut the strips into triangles.
7. Place the cookies 1 or 2 inches apart on a silpat-lined baking sheet.
8. Bake 10-12 minutes.

For the icing:

1. Mix the egg whites with lemon juice. Combine with powdered sugar, mixing well then add a few drops of green food coloring until you get the color you desire.
2. If the icing is too thin, add a little more powdered sugar, if it's too thick add a drop of lemon juice or water. Transfer to a piping bag to decorate cookies when cookies are cooled.
3. To decorate, pipe the cookies with the frosting one at a time, quickly adding the sprinkles before it hardens.

Nutrition Information

Yield: 60 cookies
Serving Size: 2 cookies

Amount Per Serving:
Freestyle Points: 5
Points +: 3
Calories: 106
Total Fat: 1g
Saturated Fat: 0g
Cholesterol: 0mg
Sodium: 50mg
Carbohydrates: 24g
Fiber: 0g
Sugar: 13.5g
Protein: 1.5g

Recipe source:

<http://bit.ly/2EzWdWZ>