

OVERSTUFFED!

7 WAYS TO AVOID PACKING ON THE EXTRA POUNDS AT HOLIDAY MEALS

By Darrell W. Butler

Well it's that time of year again when personal fitness goals officially crash and burn! For many of us, the season began when we first started to polish off that leftover Halloween candy. The real downward spiral normally starts with Thanksgiving, culminating with the need for a larger pants-size by the end of December! Finally, we party it up on New Years Eve because "starting the next day, our resolution will be to avoid the same bad habits the next year"...which often fails.

The fortunate thing about Thanksgiving and the rest of the holiday season is that they come at the same time every year. They've been on the calendar for months now and that's good news because it means that we can plan around them.

Realistically, the holidays are a wonderful time to spend with family and friends, so if you're one of the select few who has actually managed to stick to your fitness goals all year, feel free to just enjoy yourself without stressing too much about the scale. I've always maintained that with an otherwise healthy lifestyle, you can do just about anything in moderation so go ahead and take the day off, recharge and come back to your fitness routine the next day refreshed and refocused!

The rest of us however, may need to put a little extra thought into coming up with a game plan that keeps Thanksgiving from leading to our demise. It's time to break the cycle, so here are 7 surefire ways to help keep you on track through the holidays!

1. Drink a few glasses of water before your meals. Water makes you feel fuller which allows you to feel more satisfied with less food. The water will also help to offset some of the effects of the higher sodium content found in many of the foods offered this season.

2. Tell your friends and family about your fitness goals so that they can help support you. If you're close enough to the host, they might even make a few lighter options for you or you can bring a healthy dish of your own. If nothing else, this will at least help to explain your actions, which in a supportive environment should empower you to resist going overboard with temptations.

3. Pass on the sides! Try to resist overdoing it with sauces and bread-based side dishes, opting for salads, green vegetables and lean cuts of turkey or ham instead. Go heavy on those items and leave the gravy-soaked stuffing for the birds!

4. Get up once you've finished eating. At very least, clear your plate away. Most of us are good at eating in moderation that first time around, however by rounds two and three, you may have a problem! Find a willing partner and lead the conversation to another room.

5. Stay active after the meal is over. Instead of stuffing yourself and falling asleep on the couch in a food-induced coma, try going for a walk or playing with the kids - anything to possibly burn off a few of those calories. (If you start your day by exercising in the morning, it will keep you focused on staying in shape and will rev-up your metabolism and keep it burning strong throughout the day).

6. Do not take any leftovers! You can take lean meats (turkey, roast beef...) and healthier sides, but leave the desserts, fatty sides and sauces for someone else! If you're hosting, send the heavy stuff home with your guests. It's essentially a tug-of-war for who will be stuck with the temptations in their house, so make sure that you're on the winning side of that battle! If you do get stuck with the heavy stuff, you could always donate it to a charity.

7. Make good choices the day after a big meal! Just because you might take some extra liberties at the big meal, that's not a license to keep bingeing! Get back to eating well and working out as soon as possible instead of letting that single day of pleasure turn into a two-month caloric nightmare! Instead of skipping meals the next day to "punish yourself" for eating poorly, try to have several smaller healthy meals and drink plenty of water to help flush your system.

Obviously the holiday season is a rough time to stay on track with your fitness routine but if you can apply even one of these tips you'll be better off in the long run. Keep your goals in clear focus by either writing them down or buying an outfit in the ideal clothing size that you'd like to be. Hang that in the front of your closet so you'll have a visual reminder of your goal every time you open the door!



AS ALWAYS... STAY WELL & ENJOY THE JOURNEY!



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