

Forget dieting over the holidays

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Changing your focus from dieting to living healthy during the holidays boosts the chances of maintaining your perfect weight.

“Many of us will gain at least five pounds from the middle of October through New Year’s Day,” said Stefanie Barthmare, a psychotherapist with the Methodist Weight Management Center in Houston.

“Because weight gain is gradual, we don’t realize the damage of our indulgences right away. But the scale tells all when the holidays are over. That’s why “lose weight” is at the top of our New Year’s resolution every year.”

Barthmare says stop counting every calorie and restricting yourself from your holiday favorites and instead try focusing on the core elements of living a [healthy lifestyle](#), i.e. staying active in your everyday life.

“If you can’t get to the gym, do whatever it takes to move your body. Walk the dog more, plan a walking coffee break at work, play in the yard with the kids after dinner, or throw the football around with your brothers,” Barthmare said. “Plan an active, rather than a passive vacation this holiday season. If you normally go somewhere to sit, read and eat, plan a trip where you hike, bike or ski. Learn a new sport just for fun, and notice the impact on your waistline.”

Have a plan for days when there will be high calorie [meals](#) and possibly stressful family gatherings that cause you to eat comfort foods. Not

planning is what leads to trouble.

“The once-a-year mentality contributes to overindulgence, which eventually leads to [weight gain](#),” Barthmare said. “You can still have a serving of grandma’s stuffing or mom’s apple pie, the stuff you only get once a year, but it’s important to develop a strategy. Filling up on more high fiber, high volume foods earlier in the day will give yourself a better chance of maintaining your weight. Also, then there’s not as much room for the seconds at dessert.”

Another way to avoid overindulgence is to turn the focus of holiday gatherings away from food and to connecting with family and friends. Put more emphasis on finding out what others have been doing, what you have in common and how you can support one another at holiday functions.

“If you’ve been dieting all year long, you’re going to want to cut loose during the holidays and indulge in all your favorite treats,” Barthmare said. “But, this year, try switching the focus. Eat well all year, keep your body moving and make time for connections. Then you can have some guilt free [holiday](#) indulgences without sacrificing the goal of maintaining your perfect weight.”

Provided by Methodist Hospital System

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