

Skip the fat talk and go directly to model behavior to avoid fights

December 9 2013, by Nicole Wyatt



Politics and religion are considered unsafe topics of conversation at holiday dinners and parties, and experts at the University of Alabama at Birmingham say avoiding another topic—weight—can help everyone be more merry and bright.

"People might gain weight during the five-to-six weeks of the [holiday season](#), but the reality is most will not put on a substantial amount in that time period," said Josh Klapow, Ph.D., associate professor in the UAB School of Public Health.

A clinical psychologist, Klapow says discussing weight should be avoided during the holidays, even if opinions are rooted in concerns for a loved one's health. Bringing it up will likely only cause hurt feelings.

"Most people know when the scale has gone up," Klapow said. "Instead of pointing out what they may very well know, be a role model. You can take action by starting to eat healthy and exercise. Make it about you and let them model your behavior."

Beth Kitchin, Ph.D., R.D., assistant professor of nutrition sciences, says there are several ways to make it a healthier holiday season for everybody.

"This may not be a time for [weight loss](#) but just weight maintenance, as it is important to enjoy your favorite foods—just not overdo it," Kitchen said. "My big tips for supporting someone would be to plan non-food activities; combine the holiday with activity by walking through the neighborhood with a friend to look at the holiday decorations, or take the kids ice skating or go Christmas caroling."

Since food is unavoidable this time of year, plan ahead to help loved ones without saying it.

"Go shopping for healthy foods and serve these at your home when family and friends are over to eat," Kitchen said.

Other healthy [holiday](#) tips include:

- Choose the best and leave the rest: Stick with the truly special treats that are most wanted this time of year while skipping out on filler snacks and foods.
- Have a low-calorie drink available: People will be less likely to graze at the food table if they have consumed the right amount of

water.

- Master portion control: Serve portioned meals instead of eating family-style, and pretty much anything can be eaten. This will also help in staying away from seconds, especially on the highest calorie foods like sweets and desserts.

Kitchin also stresses rest as a strategy.

"Nobody should skimp on sleep," Kitchin said. "Studies show that you might overeat more when you don't get enough sleep, and you are also more likely to get sick."

Provided by University of Alabama at Birmingham

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