

Don't get stuffed on Thanksgiving

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(HealthDay)—Weight gain is a common problem during the holiday season, but it can be avoided if you have a plan and a bit of self-discipline, a nutrition specialist says.

"Lack of sleep, an abundance of decadent food and the stress of the holidays are the perfect storm for weight gain," Kristen Kizer, a registered dietitian at Houston Methodist Hospital, said in a hospital news release.

"Remind yourself how it feels to overeat and implement a personal wellness plan to get you through the [holiday season](#) without adding to your waistline," she advised.

Reduce the amount of food you prepare. Instead of 14 dishes, limit it to seven or eight dishes. Doing so will save time and money and spare you from eating leftovers for the next several days, she added.

"Holiday meals are typically heavy in carbohydrates, so try reducing your carb consumption for the day by replacing mashed potatoes with mashed cauliflower. Your guests probably won't even notice the difference," Kizer said.

Don't add marshmallows or brown sugar to sweet potatoes. Replace unhealthy green bean casserole with fresh steamed green beans with low-fat cheese sprinkled on top or roasted green beans with a little olive oil and fresh garlic.

"Substitute natural applesauce for oil or butter in your dessert recipes. This simple ingredient swap not only adds moisture and flavor to baked goods, but fiber and nutrients," Kizer said.

At parties, choose either alcohol or dessert, but not both.

"Get plenty of sleep. Getting less than six hours of sleep a night causes cravings for starchy, sugary foods and dissolves your resolve to make healthy food decisions. Most health experts recommend at least seven hours of sleep a night to feel fully rested," Kizer said.

Exercise is another important factor in preventing [weight gain](#) during the holidays, she noted.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [healthy weight](#).

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