

Researchers reveal new strategy for preventing holiday weight gain

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To avoid putting on extra pounds at the holidays, researchers have found that U.S. adults who engage in daily self-weighing can prevent holiday weight gain, according to a new study to be published in the June 2019

issue of *Obesity*.

The study examined 111 adults between the ages of 18 and 65 implementing the new intervention from mid November 2017 to early January 2018. Researchers then engaged in a 14-week follow-up period after the intervention. Participants who weighed themselves on a [daily basis](#) on scales and received graphical feedback of their [weight](#) changes either maintained or lost weight during the holiday season while participants who did not perform daily self-weighing gained weight.

The study's authors report that participants in the intervention group were instructed to try to maintain their baseline weight throughout the holiday season. However, no additional instructions on how to achieve that goal were provided. This allowed each participant to self-select how they would modify their behavior. For instance, an individual could become more physically active or decide to eat less if a weight increase was noticed. Participants in the [control group](#) were given no instructions.

"Maybe they exercise a little bit more the next day (after seeing a weight increase) or they watch what they are eating more carefully," said study author Jamie Cooper, Ph.D., an associate professor in the Department of Foods and Nutrition at the University of Georgia College of Family and Consumer Sciences. "The subjects self-select how they are going to modify their behavior, which can be effective because we know that interventions are not one-size-fits-all."

Michelle vanDellen, an associate professor in the University of Georgia Department of Psychology and second author on the paper, said the findings support discrepancy theories of self-regulation.

"People are really sensitive to discrepancies or differences between their current selves and their standard or goal," she said. "When they see that discrepancy, it tends to lead to behavioral change. Daily self-weighing

ends up doing that for people in a really clear way."

Previous research has shown that the [holiday](#) season can lead individuals to gain weight that persists after the holidays are over, which could contribute to annual weight gain. Cooper added that it has also been shown that individuals with overweight or obesity are susceptible to gaining the most weight. In contrast, individuals who regularly exercise are not protected from weight gain during the holidays.

Cooper and colleagues observed that future research is needed to determine if the act of daily self-weighing without graphical feedback would be effective at maintaining weight over the [holiday season](#).

Susan Yanovski, MD, an obesity researcher at the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases who was not involved in the study, added that "replication in larger studies with more diverse participants would help to determine the generalizability of this approach for weight gain prevention."

"Vacations and holidays are probably the two times of year people are most susceptible to [weight gain](#) in a very short period of time," Cooper concluded. "The holidays can actually have a big impact on someone's [long-term health](#)."

Obesity—defined as abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that can pose a risk to health—is a major risk factor for more than 200 comorbid conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease and cancer. Approximately 1.2 billion people worldwide have obesity, according to TOS officials.

More information: "Daily Self-Weighing to Prevent Holiday-Associated Weight Gain in Adults," *Obesity*, onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/oby.22454

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