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How to Avoid Holiday Weight Gain: 5 Small Tips that Make a Big Difference



Thanksgiving is a few weeks away, which marks the official kickoff to [holiday season](#). Between family gatherings, office parties, and crazy-big dinners, the period between Thanksgiving and New Years Eve is undoubtedly festive, but it's also a time of severe overindulgence with an endless flow of cocktails, sweets, and decadent meals.

"We all get caught up on the fun and frenzy of the holiday season," says **Mike Giliotti, New York Personal Trainer and Fitness Nutrition Specialist**. "Suddenly you find that managing your weight and sticking to your exercise program easily slides down to the bottom of your priorities," he said.

"With one celebration after another, we aren't left with much downtime, which can really take a toll on our fitness." However, with a few easy tips, holiday weight gain doesn't have to be an annual ritual.

1. Hit snooze on the booze. Many people know that the decadent dinners, abundance of sweets and overall eating extravaganza of the holidays isn't good for the waistline but it's the increased consumption of cocktails that often end up tipping the scales. Alcohol often leads to weight gain because it packs a lot of [calories](#) without making you feel full, and at the same time stimulates appetite and loss of inhibitions that can lead to reckless eating.

"It's easy to overdo it during the holidays—we eat too much, drink too much and don't exercise enough," said **Giliotti**, who pointed out that drinking too much alcohol can do more than give you a hangover.

For example, eggnog can be one of the most caloric drinks you'll drink this [holiday season](#). According to **Giliotti**, one cup of the super-rich dairy-based drink has about 400 calories—before the booze is added—and once a healthy dose of rum is mixed in, you're already at almost 500 calories for a single drink. Have two glasses and you're up to 1,000 calories, a large portion of the entire daily-recommended caloric intake!

If you want to join in the holiday festivities, stick to a glass of Champagne or wine, light beer, or create your own non-alcoholic holiday cocktails.

2. Make your New Year's fitness resolution before January.

Vowing to work out more is usually at the top of everyone's resolutions list, and as a result, gym memberships increase about 30% in January. Avoid the crowds and fees by staying ahead of the game and sign up for a membership before the end of the year. "You can usually avoid steep initiation fees and get the best deals if you sign up at the end of the month, when the gym is trying to reach their goal," said **Giliotti**.

3. Mix cardio with strength training.

With such little free time between holiday shopping and parties, finding the time to squeeze in a workout can be difficult, so you might think your only option is to cram your spare minutes into a treadmill or elliptical session to burn as many calories as possible. Although that's a solid way to get your heart rate up and burn off that second helping of pumpkin pie, sticking only to cardio isn't the best idea.

"If you want to make the most of your time, strength training is really the way to go," said **Giliotti**. "There are exercises you can do virtually anywhere and, unlike going crazy on the treadmill which definitely calls for a shower afterwards, you can get by with a light towel-off before moving on with your day. Very time efficient." Once you've built up your strength, those short little spurts of cardio will be even more effective, and you'll have more energy throughout the day.

4. Eat before you go out.

"Going to a party hungry is one of the biggest mistakes you can make!" **Giliotti** said. "Pre-made appetizers are filled with processed ingredients and very high in sodium-eat too many and you'll definitely feel it." Instead of tasting every dish that circulates, **Giliotti** suggests trying to eat something light before the party, and prepare by drinking a lot of water. Water will not only make you feel fuller, but it'll also prepare you for the large amounts of sodium and sugar you may have eaten by the end of the night.

5. Don't skip on sleep.

The best gift you could give yourself this [holiday season](#) is a full night's sleep every night. When you're running around all day, it can be so easy to forget how tired your body is. Adrenaline is very powerful, and although you may feel like a superhero getting by on just a few hours a night the damage you are doing to your body is considerable. "When you don't allow your body to rest and regenerate overnight, you will have to work extra hard during the day to stay focused. Headaches will be more frequent and you could even weaken your immune system, causing you to get sick," said **Giliotti**.