

Ask the Dietitian: Avoiding Holiday Weight Gain

Surveys done on this topic show on average adults gain between 1-5 lb during the holiday season (in addition to general weight gain over the year). Healthy eating around the holiday is possible by keeping a few things in mind, read more in our Q and A with Registered Dietitian, Katie Schneider.

Q: What are the key things I should keep in mind to prevent overeating at all the holiday parties coming up?

A: Remember Portion Size!

1. Choose small portions of high calories dishes that you want to splurge on, offset those with salads, and lower calorie options.
2. Use smaller plates if available when at a buffet-style party. If you have a large plate you will be tempted to fill the entire thing, even if you aren't that hungry.

And Eat slowly!

1. It takes about 20 min for your brain to register that your stomach is full; take your time eating to avoid becoming overly full and ingesting more than you need.

Q: So what's an easy way to do this and still have a great time out?

A: Plan ahead

1. Plan ahead, if you are cooking the meal yourself or bringing a dish to share make healthy substitutions or choose a new recipe that promises to add nutrient rich fruits and vegetables.
2. Don't arrive to a holiday party on an empty stomach- starving yourself before you arrive will increase the likelihood that you will overeat once you are there
3. Don't be afraid to ask what ingredients are used, choices made with heavy cream, cheese, gravy, meats, and added butter will be more calorie dense.

A: Watch your Beverages

1. Watch your beverage choices- sugar sweetened beverages and alcohol can add a significant amount of calories and added sugar to your meal
2. Your brain doesn't recognize the amount of calories in drinks like it does with food so you will end up taking in more energy than you need

Q: Should I get a jumpstart on the New Year by starting a diet now to keep me on track?

A: Don't Diet.

1. Make realistic goals. You don't have to diet during the holidays – it is not the time to place added stress on yourself by attempting to lose weight. Focus on weight management, which means preventing weight gain.
2. Make healthy substitutions to recipes
 - a. Fruit puree in place of oil in cakes, brownies, bread, or muffins. Ex. Applesauce
 - b. Egg whites (1 egg= 2 egg whites or ¼ cup egg substitute)
 - c. Fat free vanilla yogurt in place of whipped cream
 - d. Low sodium, fat-free chicken broth
 - e. In dips use fat free plain yogurt or sour cream

Q: OK, but how do I avoid all the tempting sweets and snacks?

A: Stay hydrated and be informed on what your snack contains!

1. Stay hydrated with H₂O to avoid food cravings

2. Avoid high calorie snacking:
 - a. 5 one inch cubes of cheese with crackers= 500 calories
 - b. 2 handfuls (1/2 cup) of mixed nuts= 450 calories, 40 g fat
 - c. 2 T. ranch or blue cheese dressing = 150 calories

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Healthy eating around the holiday is possible by keeping a few things in mind

Holidays' toll on sleep patterns (which impact food cravings, weight gain and loss, etc.)- December 23rd

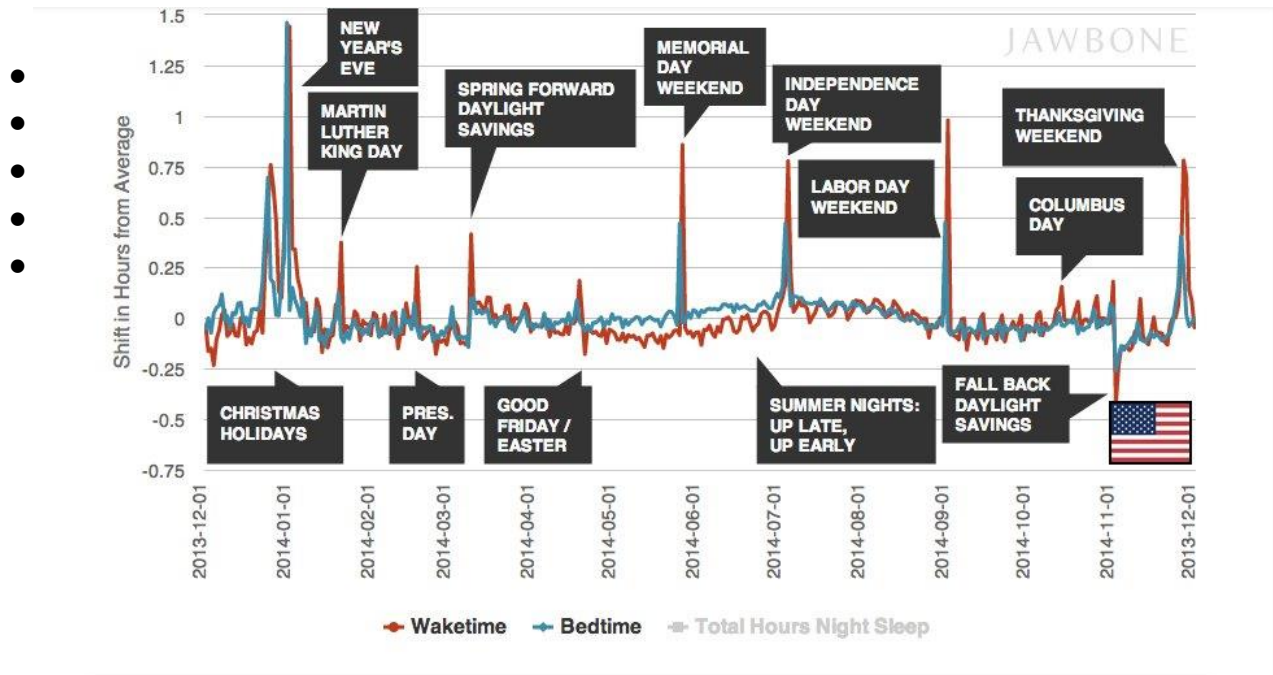
How do the holidays affect our sleep?

How do our sleep patterns affect our diets?

Tips for maintaining good patterns?

- National Sleep Foundation- 2005 Poll:
 - 1998, 35% of American adults were getting 8 hours of sleep a night
 - 2005, 26%

- During the holidays, many people find that their sleep patterns change
 - Commonly, on the day of the holiday or after people tend to stay up later and wake up later which throws off their typical sleep pattern
 - However, in preparation for the holidays many people are getting less sleep as they shop, clean, wrap gifts, coordinate travel plans...
 - See graph below- deviation from an individual's average sleep pattern peaks around the holidays



- Risk factor for obesity
 - Preliminary research has suggested that reduced sleep may be an independent risk factor for increased weight gain and thus a risk factor for obesity.

- This may be due to hormone dysregulation which impacts signals for hunger and satiety¹
- **BMI and reduced sleep**
 - In Norway with ~8900 subjects ages 40-45:
 - “Short sleep duration was associated with elevated BMI and increased prevalence of obesity. Similar to BMI, levels of cholesterol, triglycerides, systolic and diastolic blood pressure were higher in subjects with short sleep duration.”²
 - Nurses’ Health Study with 68,000 middle age American women⁴
 - Longest and largest sleep study to date
 - Women who slept <5 hours/night were 15% more likely to be obese compared to those who slept >7 hours/night
- **Effect on Food Choices**
 - Higher tendency to overeat starting earlier in the day
 - Increased likelihood to choose fast food options and convenience foods which are more calorie dense and higher in fat³
 - Increased preference for weight-gain promoting foods; without a change in appetite- therefore, sleep deprived individuals are consuming more calories due to a stimuli other than hunger⁴
 - Decreased likelihood of eating recommended amount of fruit and vegetables
- **Tips for better sleep- Mayo Clinic**
 - Stick to a schedule- be consistent to reinforce your sleep-wake cycle
 - Pay attention to what you eat before bed- don’t go to bed when you’re starving and don’t go to bed when you’re stuffed and uncomfortable
 - Turn off electronics at least 30 minutes before you plan to go to bed (including your cell phone!)
 - Limit daytime naps to 10-30 minutes in midafternoon if you need to nap
 - Include exercise daily- it can help you fall asleep faster and enjoy a deeper sleep
 - 150 min of moderate intensity aerobic activity per week (30 min/ 5x week)
 - Manage stress
 - If you are feeling burdened by the amount of things you need to accomplish when you are trying to stick to a bedtime, make a list by your bedside to remind yourself of what you can get done the next day

- If you do sleep less than you would normally, keep in mind you may make more impulsive food choices and to be mindful of what you are consuming

1. Patel SR. Reduced sleep as an obesity risk factor. *Obes Rev.* 2009. Nov 10 Suppl 2: 61-68.
2. Bjorvatn et al. The association between sleep duration, BMI, and metabolic measure in the Hordaland Health Study. *JSleep Res.* 2007 Mar; 16 (1) 66-76.
3. Kruger AK et al. Do sleep-deprived adolescents make less-healthy food choices? *Br J Nutr.* 2014.
4. <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/obesity-prevention-source/obesity-causes/sleep-and-obesity/>