

# Wellness Ways

The Methodist Hospital, Corporate Wellness • 713.441.5978 • [www.methodistcorporatewellness.com](http://www.methodistcorporatewellness.com)

Volume 33, November 2008

## *Don't Kick Butt Alone*

Resources abound and surrounding yourself with helpful tools is essential to success. One helpful Web site offers a library of information to help find the individualized program that can help make quitting your next success story. QUITNET.com lists dozens of ways to fight the habit, including a list of links with reference materials in both English and Spanish.

Check out [www.quitnet.com/library/links.jtml](http://www.quitnet.com/library/links.jtml) for ideas on where to start. Resources include a consumer's guide to quitting smoking, research reports, the problems and health risks of second-hand smoke, legislative initiatives and more.

Methodist Wellness Services also provides individual consultations with expert behaviorists to help clients committed to quitting their habits.

## *Methodist Wellness Services: Working For YOU*

Maintain – Don't Gain. This motto for healthy holiday eating demands thought and analysis beforehand. You want to have fun and enjoy the bounty of the season. But you don't want to start 2009 with 10 pounds of extra weight. Methodist Wellness has the recipe to success. Our **Holiday Eating – Fun With Food Workshop** helps pick apart your special meal and reassemble it with healthier ingredients. How about that big barbecue party on your plate? Learn how to slyly substitute a few cooking strategies that won't hurt the taste of the food but will make it better for your heart, digestion and weight. Simple things like rinsing off excess grease, using skim milk in those garlic mashed potatoes and buying egg and butter substitutes go a long way toward changing a fatty feast into a fabulous – and healthier – feed. Check the Web site for more information or to schedule a workshop: [www.methodistwellness.com](http://www.methodistwellness.com).

## *Don't Gain Weight – Feel Great This Holiday Season The Best Gift to Yourself*

Oh, the glorious sight of an overflowing holiday plate! Turkey slices hang off the edge; a huge glob of comforting mashed potatoes with a rich pool of fatty gravy take center stage; a slightly smaller mountain of stuffing – also topped with gravy – fills the rest of the plate; and, on the side, a slab of pecan pie big enough for three people.

Above is the reality of holiday eating.

Have you ever seen friends or relatives carefully measure out one-half cup of mashed potatoes? Probably not. But calories are figured per serving size, and a typical serving size is one-half cup.



One-half cup of mashed potatoes and gravy account for anywhere from 150 to 300 calories, depending on ingredients used. If you ate just one serving, you would have to walk about three miles to burn up the calories. For an average adult walking as fast as possible, that means 45 minutes of hard walking.

Now figure in the turkey, stuffing and pecan pie, which can account for an additional 1,985 calories. Altogether, a holiday feaster carefully eating measured single servings of mashed potatoes, gravy, turkey (3 to 6 ounces), stuffing and pecan pie would have to walk about **13 miles** to burn off the calories. That's nearly a half marathon, and it would take at least three hours and 15 minutes to briskly walk it off.

Remember, this does not include extras like pre-feast grazing and drinks.

Face it. Practically, it is impossible to burn off all the calories we cram into our stomachs during the holidays. There aren't enough hours in the day. So the best strategy available is a three-fold **EAT** plan of action:

- **Exercise**
- **Advance Planning**
- **Turn Away From the Trough**

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# Don't Gain Weight – Feel Great This Holiday Season The Best Gift to Yourself

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Try to incorporate exercise into the holiday schedule. Park far from the mall stores and get in some walking while shopping. Take visitors to nearby parks for morning or afternoon strolls. Play a friendly game of touch football or catch. Movement is good for the soul – and the weight. Stay as active as possible and exercise whenever you can. You will sleep better, feel better and be one step closer to maintaining your weight around all the goodies.

Advance planning means thinking before you eat. Asked to bring a dish to pass for the office party? Be the health nut this year and make a colorful vegetable tray with low fat dip. Or bring fresh fruit and arrange it in an artistic way that invites comment. Pretty food is edible food – so make the most of what nature offers.

When planning your family holiday fare, look for ways to substitute fattening and unhealthy ingredients with tasty alternatives (see related story on Page 2). Plan in advance for a party with great food by eating a light lunch or exercising an extra half hour. Treat yourself at that party but hold back at the next by eating a light snack – some pretzels and nuts or fruit and cheese – beforehand and socialize instead of eat.

Be aware of your limits and turn away from the food and drink when you no longer feel hungry. Avoid the temptation of hanging out by the buffet table. Allow yourself one small plate of hors d'oeuvres. Fill it with an attractive assortment of goodies and a modest taste of each thing that appeals to you. Then TURN AWAY and sit down. Don't go back.

In the good news/bad news department, many American media outlets report average weight gains of 5 to 10 pounds during the holiday season from November through January. A 2000 research report published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* found this estimate too high. In fact, the study of 195 adults found they gained an average of just over one pound. However, that pound remained six months later. The researchers concluded that holiday weight gain, no matter how small, stays and “probably contributes to the increase in body weight that frequently occurs during adulthood.”

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## Lighten Up The Holiday Table



Too many family food traditions include fattening, comforting dishes loaded with sugar and grease. They taste delicious, but they usually put everyone in the mood for a long winter's nap by late

afternoon. Sleeping after a huge meal is one of the worst things you can do for digestion and weight gain.

This year, lighten up. Start some new family traditions that taste just as good but won't zap the strength and energy from everyone around the table. When you're done eating, go for a walk.

**Dish 1:** The holiday turkey and gravy. This tip will take some discipline. Before serving that terrific 15-pound masterpiece, take off the skin. That's right. Carve it up and serve it without the skin. Your diners won't miss what they can't see. Before stirring up the gravy, skim off the fat. Use low fat, low sodium broth with the remaining liquid in the pan and thicken with a little flour or cornstarch. If stirring up a creamy gravy, use skim milk. Cutting the bulk of the turkey grease goes a long way toward serving a healthier bird.

**Dish 2:** Canned sweetened yams with extra butter, brown sugar, marshmallows and pecans. With enough sugar and fat to send you into orbit, this dish surely needs lightening up. Make your own specialty with fresh sweet potatoes cut into wedges or rounds. Cover the pieces with olive oil cooking spray, a hint of cinnamon and a handful of crushed pecans and bake at 425 to 450 degrees for a half hour. You can also broil the sweet potatoes for 15 minutes if you keep an eye on them and turn them often. The new leaner dish has just as much flavor but is better for you.

**Dish 3:** Cornbread stuffing with fried sausage, pieces of dark turkey meat, eggs, butter and bread roasted inside the greasy pouch of the holiday bird. Again, a dish with enough calories and fat for a week and way too much for one meal. Try something new. Wild rice with nuts and your favorite spices is a tasty and light alternative and can be conveniently baked by itself. This lighter dish is especially helpful if your family insists on heavy doses of mashed potatoes with the holiday dinner.

**Final Tip:** Instead of setting out trays of chips, sweets and other fattening fare, carve up a watermelon basket and fill it with different shaped pieces of fresh fruit. Pineapples, apples, grapes, melons, and bananas offer a healthy pre-meal snack and won't stuff visitors before the main event. Traditions are hard to change. But they can be revised and improved to make for a happier and healthier holiday.