

Holiday Weight Gain: Taking It Off Is Harder Than Putting It On

By: [*Providence Medical Group*](#)

An international team of researchers has parsed the numbers and reached a conclusion that you already knew, way down deep inside.

It turns out that most people in three developed countries – the United States, Germany and Japan – gain a noticeable amount of weight over the holidays. And some of it stays with you long after the holidays are over.

The good news is that this is something you can control. As the researchers from the U.S., Finland and France gently put it: “Advising a patient to have better self-control over the holidays is one approach. Yet given the weight-loss patterns ... it might be better to advise patients that although up to half of holiday weight gain is lost shortly after the holidays, half the weight gain appears to remain until the summer months or beyond. “Of course, the less one gains, the less one then has to worry about trying to lose it,” they wrote.

What you can do

The best answer is pretty simple: Don’t eat more than your body needs. Yet holidays have a way of diverting us from our usual disciplines, as we gather with friends and relatives to eat festive dishes in friendly company. That’s one of the things that make the holidays special.

If the damage is done this season, here are some ideas from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention about taking off your holiday weight:

1. Make the commitment to lose weight and be healthier.
2. Take stock of where you are by considering how much time you have to exercise and by taking inventory of your diet, perhaps with a food diary.
3. Set goals for yourself that are realistic, specific and tolerant of setbacks. For example, you might say commit to taking a 15-minute walk after meals, or choosing a salad each time instead of French fries. Understand that you’re likely to miss the mark sometimes.
4. Know where you can draw support, such as from an exercise partner or family member.
5. Evaluate your progress regularly.

To read more We’ve written before about the problem of seasonal feasting and weight gain:

[Enjoy the holiday spread, but know the Heimlich maneuver »](#)

[Is a high-protein diet the key to achieving a healthy weight? »](#)

[Binge eaters may have a new weapon to enable healthy eating »](#)

[Overweight in middle age? Your brain pays a toll »](#)

The CDC has tips, resources and information about losing weight and keeping it off in [its Losing Weight section](#).

The researchers’ letter, [“Weight Gain over the Holidays in Three Countries,”](#) was published in the New England Journal of Medicine.

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