

# WELLNESS EXCHANGE

December 2013

## Holiday Safety Tips

The holiday season is always a special time of year. It is also a time when busy people become careless and vulnerable to theft and other forms of crime. Don't be an easy target. By being prepared and staying aware, you can help keep the holidays safe.



### The Importance of Awareness

Though safety precautions vary depending on your environment, there are some universal safety tips you can use in any situation. First, always be aware. Make sure to notice your surroundings, even in a place you are very familiar with. Be confident. Walk with your head up, be alert and appear to have a destination. Many of us take our safety for granted. Be proactive vs. reactive by knowing some simple safety tips. The Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Police Department recommends the following safety tips to celebrate safely this holiday season:

### If You Are Traveling

- Make sure your lights are set up on an automatic timer.
- Ask a neighbor to watch your home, pick up any deliveries that may arrive, shovel snow and park in the driveway from time to time.
- Have your mail and newspaper delivery service stopped for the duration of your holiday travels.

### If You Are Out for the Evening

- Make it look like someone's home. Turn on the radio or TV and leave the lights on in a few rooms throughout your home.
- Be extra cautious about locking doors and windows when you leave, even if it's just for a few minutes.
- Don't display gifts where they can be seen from outside.

### Safe Shopping Do's and Don'ts

- DON'T get stuck. Keep your car filled with gas and in good working condition.
- DON'T leave personal items or gifts visible. Keep windows up and doors locked. Even if you're coming right back to the car, roll up the windows and lock the doors. Check inside and out before entering your vehicle. When you get in your car - go.

- DON'T wait until you reach your vehicle to locate keys. Be smart, have your keys ready.
- DO keep your cell phone charged.
- DO park in well-lit areas and stay alert in parking garages. If you think you're being followed, walk closely to cars and touch them to possibly set off alarms.
- DO use the drive through window at the bank rather than using walk-up ATM's.
- DO go with a shopping buddy rather than alone (if possible).
- DO teach kids to look for a store clerk, a security guard or a mother with children if they become separated from you.

### Protect Your Vehicle

The D.C. Metropolitan Police Department explains that loading up on all those gifts is a sign of progress in the holiday shopping. But if those packages are left out in the open after they're in the car, your car is likely to become a target for thieves. Always lock your vehicle and store all items out of sight. Breaking into an empty car is not worth a thief's time. However, anything left in plain view, from holiday gifts to spare change, may tempt a thief.

### Celebrate Responsibly

The holiday season is a time of celebration and revelry. Drinking and driving is a danger to everyone on the road. Remember these tips to stay safe:

- Always arrange for a designated driver or alternate means of transportation, such as a taxi.
- Never drink and drive.
- Keep in mind that "buzzed driving" is just as dangerous as drunk driving.
- Never get in the car with a driver who has been drinking.
- Remember: Only time will eliminate alcohol from your system.



# Minimize Holiday Weight Gain

It's that time of year when extra calories lurk around every corner. Wherever you go, whatever you do, food always seems to be the focus. If you're like most Americans, you'll put on a pound or two (or more!) by New Year's Day.



## The Truth About Holiday Weight Gain

So what's the harm in a little holiday weight gain, especially if it's just a pound? According to researchers at the National Institutes of Health, most Americans never lose the weight they gain during the winter holidays. The pounds add up year after year, making holiday weight gain an important factor in adult obesity - a risk factor for heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and other serious health problems.

Don't worry! The festivities don't have to be eliminated or avoided. You can have a fabulous time while maintaining your weight and fitness regimen. Moderation is the secret to achieving a fun and healthy holiday season. So this year, get a head start on your New Year's resolution and make a plan to maintain your current weight or even start to lose extra pounds before January.

## Holiday Pointers

Here are some tips to help you during those hectic holiday weeks:

**Create a plan.** Before the holidays arrive, create a plan for incorporating fitness and good nutrition into your daily routine. Evaluate your holiday schedule and determine how much time you will realistically have to devote to exercise and eating healthy meals.

**Never go to a party hungry.** Instead of starving yourself and then filling up on high-calorie, high-fat foods at the party, take the edge off your hunger beforehand by eating high-fiber, low calorie foods.

**Sample the goods.** When presented with a large variety of food options, it's tempting to want to eat everything. Rather than eating one large slice of chocolate cake or a huge plate of meatballs, select a sampling of bite size pieces of several of the desert or appetizer offerings. This way you get the enjoyment of trying many different foods without overeating.

**Avoid wasting calories on alcoholic beverages.** The average alcoholic drink contains 150-200 calories per glass. Indulge in just two or three drinks and you've drunk the equivalent of calories in

an entire meal. If you partake in these beverages, choose wisely. For example, instead of high-fat eggnog, have a light beer or wine. After that, stick with low-calorie drinks like water, tea or coffee.

**Keep healthy snacks within reach.** When running errands or shopping, be sure to pack some healthy snacks to have on-hand. Then after you work up a big appetite, you won't be tempted to grab something at the mall food court or the fast food restaurant on the way home.

**Exercise at home.** You may be more inclined to follow through on your exercise commitment if you don't have to drive somewhere to work out. Plus, you won't waste any time on driving, parking, changing in the locker room or waiting to use equipment. There are a wide array of at-home exercise programs to fit your needs and interests.

**Don't put your fitness goals on hold until the New Year.** If you can't exercise as often during this time period as you normally do, adjust appropriately. Don't use the excuse that since you don't have time for your full work out you just won't work out at all. Instead, accept your limited availability and simply reduce the frequency or duration of your exercise. It's much better to cut your fitness time in half than to completely eliminate it.

## Take Charge of Your Party Choices

**Small plate, please!** If available, consider using a smaller plate when sampling appetizers and treats at holiday get-togethers.

**Avoid the sauce.** Avoid sauces made from cream, half-and-half or meat drippings.

**Say 'No' politely.** Many times you feel forced to eat foods because people keep putting it in front of you. Learn to say no politely, such as "No thank you, I've had enough."

**Focus on socializing.** Don't stand around the food table when you are at a party - focus on making conversation with others instead of focusing on foods. Conversation is calorie-free.

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