

The British Dietetic Association's advice for Christmas



On average, we will consume around 6,000 calories (kcal) on Christmas day alone (versus the recommended daily amount of 2,000 kcal for women and 2,500 kcal for men)¹!

Not only that but, over the festive period, which seems to kick off earlier and earlier every year, the average person could consume an extra 500 kcals per day, equating to a weight gain of around 5lb by the time we reach the beginning of the New Year².

The British Dietetic Association (BDA) is on hand to highlight some handy tips to ensure the only thing that gets really stuffed this Christmas is the turkey!

The BDA, founded in 1936, is the professional association for registered dietitians in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It is the nation's largest organisation of food and nutrition professionals with over 7,000 members.

Forward Plan: If you're going to eat out, eat smaller meals in the run up and the next day and cut out any other treats beforehand. Only open one box of chocolates at a time rather than having five on the go and put unopened boxes away. Out of sight, out of mind.

Buffet Surfing: Don't stalk the buffet table. If you do indulge, visit only once using a smaller dessert sized plate, avoiding the high saturated fat offerings like sausage rolls and quiche, in favour of fruit, skinless chicken and vegetable crudités.

Office Overload: Don't get tempted to Hoover up your colleagues Christmas chocolates and other tempting offerings. Avoid the office communal chocolate/ mince pies fest. Take festive fruit like satsumas into work.

Smart Supermarket: When going to the supermarket, make a list and stick to it (good advice anytime of the year). Only buy what you need. Avoid those aisles of temptation, you know exactly where they are. If you want some festive snacks, try plain popcorn, pretzels, and vegetable crudités with a yummy low fat dip.

Skin Deep: Turkey is a great source of protein and a low fat meat. Most of the fat that is present in a cooked turkey will be found in the skin. Why not take the skin off before you tuck in?

No Portion Distortion: At least a third of your dinner plate should be a variety of vegetables, such as unbuttered Brussels sprouts, peas and carrots. Cook for the shortest length of time possible in the smallest amount of water necessary, steam or microwave to keep all the nutrients in. Use the veg water for gravy and any leftover veg for a delicious soup. These make a great contribution to your 5-a-day and they also help fill you up to stop the urge to snack between meals.

Healthy Options. If you want to go that extra step, try dry roasting potatoes on a non-stick baking sheet or use an oil spray or brush instead of smothering them in goose fat. You can also make your gravy using vegetable stock instead of meat juices, accompanied by a fruit-based stuffing with bread sauce made with low fat milk. If using meat stock for gravy, let the fat rise to the top then skim off.

Bottoms Down. Those who like to indulge in a drink or two, tend to drink more over the Christmas period. Alcohol is very energy dense (7kcal/g versus 4kcal/g for protein or carbs and 9kcal/g for fat). Avoid sweet cocktails and creamy liquers.

Try alternating your drink with a glass of water or other calorie-free drinks and if you do enjoy a short with a mixer, stock up on low-calorie mixers and unsweetened fruit juices and beware the home measures and large glasses!

Pie-Eyed. The average mince pie contains about 250 calories and that's before it's covered in cream or brandy butter. Remove the lid to cut calories. Christmas is also the time of year when most houses have boxes and boxes of chocolates and biscuits to hand. While we all like to enjoy the odd treat now and then, balance this with some healthy options, such as satsumas piled high in a bowl, dried fruit, figs and nuts. Again, out of sight is out of mind, so put away the biscuits and chocolates.

Speaking about these tips, Sian Porter, consultant dietitian and spokesperson for the BDA, said: "We're not being killjoys and saying everybody should follow all of these tips, what we are saying is, if you are thinking about your calorie intake over Christmas, these tips may be worth considering.

"Christmas is a time when we all consume a little more than we usually do and that is absolutely fine. It's all about the bigger picture and if you are eating a balanced diet in the run-up to Christmas and perhaps in the New Year, you will be fine. Make sure you have lots of healthy options to eat too, as often treats lose their allure when we're eating them daily and we can get bored of all the rich food on offer and crave some basic foods like beans on toast or a refreshing fruit salad.

"The British Dietetic Association wishes you all a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year!"