

## **Eat, Drink and be Healthy at Christmas**

At Christmas we are always surrounded by lots of lovely food and drink. Don't feel guilty about enjoying yourself but do remember that on average people gain about 5lbs (2kgs) over Christmas. On average we will eat a massive 6000 calories on Christmas day and it would take 780 minutes of running to burn it off.

### **Festive Food Facts:**

- Sales of Christmas foods amounted to a massive £3.2 billion in 2007, up by 14% in 2006.
- On average each household will spend approximately £210 on food and drink over Christmas.
- At Christmas the UK will indulge in around:
  - 19.000 tons of turkey
  - 120.000 tons of potatoes
  - 1.200 tons of parsnips
  - 1.600 tons of chestnuts
  - 7.5 million carrots
  - 16 million packets of stuffing
  - 11 million Christmas cakes
  - 40,000 tons of Clementine, mandarins and Satsuma's.
  - 5.5 million jars of mincemeat
  - 12 million jars of pickles
  - 6.5 million jars of cranberry sauce
  - 15.000 tons of sprouts (each person will eat an average of 15 sprouts)
  - 175 million mince pies ( they would stretch 3,262 miles high – that is nearly 600 times the height of Mount Everest)
  - Nearly 3.000 tons of aluminium foil will be used to wrap Christmas turkeys.
  - The average person will eat a gut busting 7000 calories on Christmas day and it would take roughly 780 minutes of running to burn off those calories.

The British Dietetic Association say that although we are likely to put on an average of 5lbs or 2kgs in weight over the Christmas period, the Christmas meal is not the main culprit, but that overindulging on second helpings, snacks and alcohol which are likely to cause the bulging of waist lines. They go on to say that in fact the traditional turkey roast can be very good for us.

Turkey is a low fat meat – most of the fat is stored in the skin, so remove the skin and you cut down on fat.

Add plenty of seasonal vegetables, which will contribute to your 5-a-day fruit and vegetable intake and help, stop the urge to snack in between meals.

Smoked salmon makes a good starter and is a source of omega-3 fatty acids, which helps keep your heart healthy; alternatively you could try a hearty soup or refreshing melon starter.

Fresh fruit salad or baked apples would make a much healthier alternative to usual Christmas Pud.

Use low fat custards or crème fraiche, as this will add to your reduced fat intake.

It is usually all the little extras that pile on the calories and with all the tasty snacks around at Christmas, it is easy to over do it. E.g. a single mince pie contains about 250 calories! So if possible make sure you have healthy options to hand, such as:

- Fresh or dried fruit like dates, figs and apricots. Satsuma's are very handy, so keep a large bowl of these and other fruit close by.
- Chestnuts are lower in fat than most other nuts, so roast a few and forget about the salted peanuts.
- Plain popcorn, pretzels, raw vegetables and low fat dips.

While a couple of glasses of red wine may be good for your heart, too much won't help you feel at your best, so knowing your limits when it comes to alcohol will help you avoid that post-Christmas bulge Why not alternate alcoholic drinks with non-alcoholic and low calorie ones?

Above all do enjoy yourself – and do not forget that being active will help you work off those extra calories. Why not dance the night away at all those office parties and on Christmas day, wrap up and go for a walk after lunch.

### **How to avoid Hangovers**

Splitting headaches, sickness, and dizziness, dehydration: everyone who has ever drunk too much knows the consequences of it!

Alcohol is a diuretic (removes fluids from the body) so drinking excessively can lead to dehydration. Dehydration is what causes many of the symptoms of a hangover.

Hangover cures are generally a myth. There are no cures for a hangover, but there are tips for avoiding hangovers and for easing the symptoms if you have one.

- The best way to avoid a hangover is not to drink. If you do drink, drink sensibly and within the recommended limit.
- Do not drink on an empty stomach. Before you go out have a meal that includes carbohydrates (e.g. pasta or rice) or fats. The food will help slow down the body's absorption of the alcohol.
- Do not drink dark-coloured drinks if you have found that you are sensitive to them. They contain natural chemicals called Congeners (impurities) which may irritate blood vessels and brain tissue making your hangover worse.
- Drink water or non-fizzy soft drinks in between each alcoholic drink. Fizzy drinks speed up the absorption of alcohol into your system.
- Drink a pint or so of water before you go to sleep and keep a glass of water by the bed side if you wake up during the night.

## **The morning after**

If you do wake up the next morning feeling as if you have gone 10 rounds with Mike Tyson, you probably did not follow any of the advice given. Although there are no real cures for a hangover, there are some ways to help ease the symptoms:

- Rehydration of the body so that it can deal with the painful symptoms (the best time to rehydrate is before going to sleep)
- Over-the-counter painkillers can help with headaches. Paracetamol based remedies are usually preferable as Aspirin may further irritate the stomach and increase nausea and sickness.
- Sugary foods may help you feel less trembly. In some cases an antacid may be needed to settle your stomach first.
- Bouillon soup, (a thin vegetable based broth) is a good source of vitamins and minerals to top up depleted resources. Its main advantage is that it is easy for a fragile stomach to digest.
- Drink bland liquids, (e.g. water, soda water or isotonic drinks) to replace the lost fluids caused by excessive alcohol intake.
- “Hair of the dog” does not help!
- If you have had a heavy drinking session, hangover or not, doctors recommend that you allow 48 hours to pass before you drink any more alcohol, in order to give your body tissues time to recover. – Sometimes a hangover itself makes that advice easier to follow.

## **Reference:**

The Dietetic Association  
The Food Standards Agency  
NHS Direct

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