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# How do I prevent holiday weight gain?

BY DR. JULIE T. CHEN, M.D.

I am worried about gaining weight during the holiday season. I think I have a hard time controlling what I eat because my house is always loaded with unhealthy foods that the rest of my family buys. What should I get rid of in my house and what should I stock up on?

**Y**OU have just posed the commonly asked question I get in my clinic during the holiday season: “How do I keep from gaining weight during the holiday season?”

During a stressful time like the holiday season, the easiest way to gain weight is to surround yourself with fattening foods. When people are busy and stressed, people tend to stress eat or eat mindlessly.

Mindful eating (to be aware of what you are eating and why) is something I always encourage for patients for weight loss. But let’s be honest, during the holiday season you may be so busy and stressed that it might be nearly impossible to do that.

So what should you toss from your house and what should you keep to help you keep the inches from piling on?

**These are the typical categories of foods to toss out:**

1. Frozen, pre-made desserts like ice cream, popsicles, and cakes
2. Processed, pre-packaged foods
3. Sugar or sugar substitutes
4. Diet or regular soda
5. Cookies and chips
6. Pre-made processed sauces or dressings
7. Chocolates
8. Candies
9. Any foods that you can easily overeat and have a hard time with portion control
10. Avoid excess fruit or starches in the house. Buy just enough of the healthy whole

grains and low-sugar fruits that you and your family can consume in moderation.

In general, processed foods worsen cholesterol, sugars and weight so you definitely want to avoid keeping processed foods in the house. They also are typically chock full of typical food sensitivities or allergens. So, even if you’re not sure what you are sensitive to, these processed foods won’t be making your weight, health, or intestinal tract very happy.

**The typical things you should keep in your fridge and pantry are:**

1. A variety of rainbow-coloured vegetables; frozen is fine and potentially more cost-effective as long as they are not frozen with sauces already drenched on them
2. Organic white meat of chicken or turkey
3. Wild fish
4. Raw nuts
5. Sparkling or still water (you can keep fresh lemon or lime around to add natural flavors to water)
6. Organic teas
7. If you must have red meat, as in if you are iron deficient, aim for bison over beef since it is lower in saturated fats
8. Legumes
9. Quinoa or faro
10. Crudité and hummus dips
11. Balsamic vinegar and olive oil with spices to make your own dressings



12. Fresh popcorn made yourself (no prepackaged popcorn)

If you must have something sweet, you can make fresh juices from fruits and freeze them for popsicles; agave nectar and stevia are good sweet substitutes.

These are just some ideas to get you started. If you’ll notice, the key difference is that I want real foods made by Mother Nature in your fridge and pantry. Many of these foods are easy to grab and eat just as they are without a lot of prep time. So, throw out those pre-packaged processed foods and put in your life these wholesome foods that Mother Nature meant for you to eat. If you do, you’ll keep from gaining weight—so you will still fit into that beautiful slimming dress you wore during the summer months for your New Year’s Eve celebration! **2**

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