

Avoid Weight Gain over the Holiday Season

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The holidays are not an ideal time to try to start a “diet”. Your goal should be to maintain your weight during this time frame. If you decide to indulge in a piece of chocolate fudge or some other decadent dessert, don’t berate yourself. Simply cut back on calories elsewhere during the rest of the day or spend a few extra minutes on the treadmill.

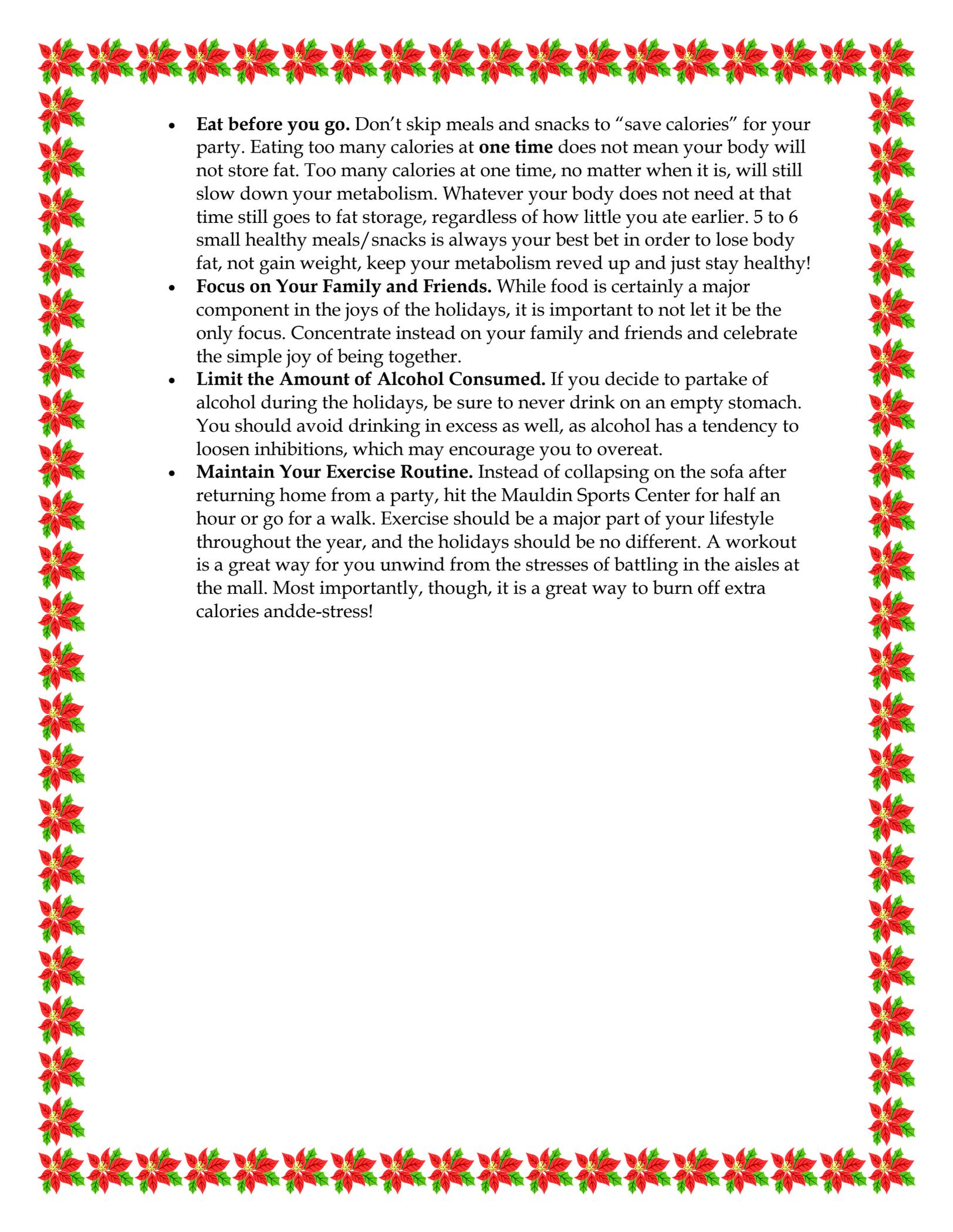
Make simple changes to the foods you prepare

Many traditional holiday foods are loaded with fat and calories. This doesn’t mean that all of your favorite foods are off limits, however. Look instead for ways to make them healthier. Here are some simple ways to trim calories and fat from holiday foods:

- Cut the fat and calories in gravy by passing it through a skimmer before serving.
- Eat skinless white-meat turkey instead of dark meat.
- Cook the stuffing outside the turkey. It contains fewer calories and fat than stuffing cooked inside the bird and reduces the risk of bacteria contamination.
- Serve items that are very low in calories and fat, such as a fresh fruit salad or steamed vegetables topped with lemon juice and herbs.
- Substitute baked potatoes instead of candied yams.
- Top vegetables with light margarine, spray butter or reduced-fat sour cream instead of butter.
- Serve an apple pie topped with fat free frozen yogurt instead of pecan pie.

In addition to altering your cooking methods, there are other ways that you can avoid packing on those holiday pounds. Before you head out to your next party, keep these recommendations in mind:

- **Choose Your Parties and Dinners Wisely.** If you have been invited to several holiday events, do you really need to attend them all? The more parties you attend, the more likely you will be to overindulge. If you do decide to attend them all, never arrive on an empty stomach. Eat a small salad or other low-fat snack before leaving. This will help you from overeating at the buffet table once you are at the party.
- **Avoid Mindless Snacking.** When you are at a party, don’t stand near the food tables. If you are carrying on a conversation with another person, go sit down somewhere instead of hovering over the buffet. This will help prevent you from unconsciously nibbling on extra food.

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- **Eat before you go.** Don't skip meals and snacks to "save calories" for your party. Eating too many calories at **one time** does not mean your body will not store fat. Too many calories at one time, no matter when it is, will still slow down your metabolism. Whatever your body does not need at that time still goes to fat storage, regardless of how little you ate earlier. 5 to 6 small healthy meals/snacks is always your best bet in order to lose body fat, not gain weight, keep your metabolism revved up and just stay healthy!
 - **Focus on Your Family and Friends.** While food is certainly a major component in the joys of the holidays, it is important to not let it be the only focus. Concentrate instead on your family and friends and celebrate the simple joy of being together.
 - **Limit the Amount of Alcohol Consumed.** If you decide to partake of alcohol during the holidays, be sure to never drink on an empty stomach. You should avoid drinking in excess as well, as alcohol has a tendency to loosen inhibitions, which may encourage you to overeat.
 - **Maintain Your Exercise Routine.** Instead of collapsing on the sofa after returning home from a party, hit the Mauldin Sports Center for half an hour or go for a walk. Exercise should be a major part of your lifestyle throughout the year, and the holidays should be no different. A workout is a great way for you unwind from the stresses of battling in the aisles at the mall. Most importantly, though, it is a great way to burn off extra calories and de-stress!