

It's no secret that many of us LOVE CHRISTMAS! But with a calendar full of festive parties, it's easy to fall off the healthy wagon making it so much harder to climb back on board.

NEW YEAR

new you

Christmas is a wonderful time to be enjoyed and feel generous. But the tendency to overeat at Christmas time can leave us lamenting the excess and facing an uphill battle as we try to lose it all again in the New Year. Often times in the bright optimism of January, we seek to absolve our indulgences with abstinence and clean the slate with some radical new year's resolutions.

Whilst goal setting is clearly important, research shows us that when it comes to New Years resolutions, we often set ourselves up to fail by having unrealistic expectations which are even more difficult to achieve following the silly season. So this year, why not be kinder to yourself? Instead of swinging from the extremes of indulgence to a berating penance, why not consider a gentle, more balanced approach? If you know you are likely to over-indulge, it may be helpful to get some healthy strategies in place now and lay the foundations to help you feel great in your little black dress and beyond.

INDULGE MINDFULLY

Feasting on delicious food with family and friends at Christmas can be a wonderful experience, but it is so easy to go overboard. If left unchecked, we can consume up to 6,000 calories on Christmas Day (2,000 a day is the recommendation for women). Keep in mind portion control is one of the most effective ways to

stay ahead of the game over the silly season. To feel lighter and more energised, fill half your plate with vegetables making sure some are leafy greens, and always include a portion of lean protein such as turkey, fish, prawns, beans and steer clear of rich and creamy sauces. Plate up all your food once and don't go back for seconds. Eating slowly and chewing each mouthful until your food is liquid will help you savour the flavour of your foods and feel more satisfied for longer. If eating out, remember restaurant portions are often much larger than healthy portion sizes. To avoid consuming too many calories, consider sharing some dishes such as dessert or ordering two starters and extra veg on the side.

STRIVE FOR BALANCE

Support yourself over the holidays by planning your treat days rather than indulging the entire festive season. On these days, be sure to get some exercise and aim for the overarching 80:20 rule – 80% healthy and 20% naughty. On treat days, keep things balanced by enjoying a super-healthy breakfast and a light lunch followed by a brisk walk on the prom or some weight-bearing exercise before you let your hair down in the evening. Another sure-fire way to buffer yourself from temptation is to avoid showing up to parties hungry. Aim to fuel up on healthy food first, so you can bypass the finger food and focus on your friends.



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DODGE THE SUGAR

Christmas can be a sugar fest, leaving us feeling bereft and sluggish come the New Year. Sugar and foods that are broken down into sugar quickly are the major culprits of most people's health problems. Eating foods that are high in refined carbohydrates or binging on sugary foods can lead to spikes in our blood sugar, which later crashes. This results in cravings for more sugar/ refined carbs, creating a negative cycle. Dodge the inevitable sugar roller-coaster over Christmas by limiting or avoiding high sugar (white) foods and stocking up on healthy alternatives to your usual sugary treats. For example, include hummus, prawns, smoked mackerel, limit cheese on your sharing boards and try spicy roasted nuts instead of chocolates.

SIP WINE, DRINK WATER

Not only is alcohol extremely energy-dense, high in calories and devoid of nutrients, it can also be dehydrating and wash out key stress-busting nutrients such as vitamin B12, magnesium and vitamin C. During the colder months, central heating, stoves and open fires can easily leave us feeling dehydrated. Whatever you do, do not use alcoholic beverages to satisfy your thirst! When celebrating, give yourself the golden rule of starting off your evening with a non-alcoholic drink and alternating every alcoholic drink with a soda water or other non-alcoholic drink.

Your liver will thank you and you will feel much lighter, brighter and more calm the next day. Aim to give yourself some alcohol-free days to support your natural detoxification and stock up on alcohol-free alternatives which you can enjoy. Apple and cinnamon herbal tea is delicious when relaxing by the fireside.

POSITIVE CYCLE

It is estimated that most people only maintain their New Year's resolution for about one week to 10 days, mostly because people set themselves unrealistic and unachievable goals which they can't keep up.

We often get stuck in routines and habits so it can be difficult to make changes. Research shows you are more likely to succeed in effecting positive change if you have achievable short-term goals that you can stick to. So why wait until January to get your healthy wheels in motion? Introducing small steps now may give you a head start and lay the important foundations for success.

