

Eat, Drink and Be Holiday Healthy

Written by Paula Owens, MS

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Tis the season! Over the next few weeks, schedules are filled with shopping, holiday parties, relatives, financial pressures, obligations, and plenty of food and spirits. Socializing during the holidays can be stressful and challenging, especially if your friends and family are not as health-conscious as you. The abundance of holiday treats and homemade goodies can be hard to resist. Fortunately, there's plenty you can do to avoid holiday weight gain, [manage blood sugar](#), stay healthy, happy and fit, and enjoy holiday celebrations without feeling bloated, guilty or stressed out.



Prevent Holiday Weight Gain: Strategies to Maintain So You Don't Gain

Hydrate. Even though the temps are cooler, be sure to drink plenty of water throughout the day to avoid dehydration. Cravings, fatigue, headaches, dry skin, low back pain and constipation are all symptoms related to dehydration. Upon rising, drink a glass of [water](#). It's not only important for hydration, but can cut daily food intake by 13 percent! Add the juice from a [lemon or lime](#) to your morning cup of water to [nourish liver function](#) increasing your body's ability to cleanse itself of toxins. Remember, when you're body's hydrated you no longer retain water, your skin looks healthier and you minimize the puffy, bloated look.

Stay active and move your body every day which helps relieve [stress](#), regulate appetite, lower blood sugar and insulin, increase metabolism and boost your mood. Rev up your [metabolism](#) with a 30 minute metabolic strength training workout found in my book, [Fat Loss Revolution](#). If you're short on time, try the [Sprint 8 workout](#) or the [10-5-5 Workout](#). Both of these workouts take less than 30 minutes.

Move your body when you can – take a bike ride, walk your dog, join a fitness class, practice some stress-relieving yoga, hike with friends, get up and stretch or hire a strength coach/fitness expert. Take a walk after mealtime to support digestion and boost metabolism.

Sleep. Don't skimp on sleep. Prioritize 7-9 hours of restful sleep every night. Consistently sleeping less than 7 hours per night disrupts hormones, increases desire for carb-heavy, sugary junk foods and may be the reason you're stressed out, feeling blue or unable to drop stubborn belly fat. Research shows that those who fail to get enough restful sleep consume more calories, especially from unhealthy foods. [Sleep Solutions that work](#)

Cooking & baking tips. The holiday season is filled with carb-laden treats and gluten-containing foods that can cause [digestive distress](#) and are a detriment to your mood *and* your waistline. Parties can be challenging for people who are gluten intolerant or those who choose to avoid grains. And just because an item is gluten-free, doesn't mean it's healthy. Many gluten-free items contain rice flour, tapioca starch, and the like spike insulin and cause drastic blood sugar fluctuations. Fortunately, you can re-create many of your favorite recipes with a variety of healthier options.

Instead of:	Replace with:
Vegetable oil	Organic apple sauce, pureed prunes or coconut oil
Baking Soda/Powder	Aluminum-free baking soda/powder
Cornstarch	Arrowroot powder
Flour	Coconut flour, almond meal, hazelnut flour
Margarine	Organic, pastured, grass-fed butter

Gluten-free Holiday Cookies. Here's a healthier gluten-free cookie recipe for those of you who enjoy baking during the holiday season and love cookies.

1 cup grass-fed butter (soft)	1 – 2 tsp. pure vanilla
1-1/2 cups coconut flour (sifted)	1/4 cup coconut sugar
1/4 tsp. stevia	2 tbsp. raw

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extract (if you like sweeter cookies)
1 tsp. baking soda plus 1/2 tsp. sea salt
Optional: 1 cup ground nuts of your choice
honey
2 pastured whole eggs
Optional: dark chocolate & chunky sea salt

Combine flour, baking soda and salt. Add remaining ingredients and stir thoroughly. Take a small amount of dough into your hand and place a chunk of [dark chocolate](#) in the middle of each cookie. Form into a ball shape and place onto baking sheet. Sprinkle chunky sea salt on cookies before baking. Bake at 375 degrees for approximately 10 - 12 minutes until set, not brown. Cool and enjoy!

Healthy Holiday Eating. Stay on track with your diet and healthy fat loss lifestyle through the holidays and you'll prevent weight gain. Utilize the "PVFC method" found in [Fat Loss Revolution](#) when planning your meals and prioritize protein (P), veggies (V), and fat (F), and minimize the carb (C) category.

On the go. Avoid becoming famished when you're away from home. Prepare ahead and pack healthy snacks in your purse or glove compartment. Some healthy options include a protein shake, raw nuts or seeds with an apple, celery with almond butter, hardboiled eggs or [beef, bison or turkey jerky](#).

Breakfast. You might be tempted to skip breakfast to reserve calories for an upcoming party, however skipping breakfast is a sure backfire to weight gain. Follow the PVFC method found in [Fat Loss Revolution](#). Consume a protein- and fiber-rich breakfast, which will provide a feeling of fullness, boost your energy and brain chemistry, and you'll eat less later in the day. What you choose to eat for breakfast reflects how you feel the remainder of the day. Check out my [Shades of Green smoothie](#) or some these [healthy breakfast options](#).

Mid-morning buzz. Pass on the white chocolate peppermint mocha with whip cream, which is full of artificial sweeteners, sugars and a whopping 700 calories! Instead, opt for organic [coffee](#). Add a bit of organic heavy whipping cream, butter or coconut oil and a pinch of cinnamon for holiday flavor. Sip on some yerba mate or green tea to increase mental alertness and energy without the jitters. Research suggests the ECGC in green tea can boost fat burning.

Lunch. Fill up on protein such as organic chicken, grass-fed steak or wild salmon to stabilize your mood, boost energy and prevent late afternoon sugar cravings. Boost fiber-intake from non-starchy veggies or a dark leafy green salad mixed mix with plenty of olive oil or avocado plus lemon or apple cider vinegar.

Afternoon energizer. Avoid processed carbs, sugary snacks and sodas full of empty calories and void of any nutritional value whatsoever. Sure you'll get a quick burst of energy, but at the expense of creating an insulin spike, depleting yourself of energy, craving more carbs, creating hormonal havoc, and eventually adding inches to your waistline. [Choose one of these healthier snack options](#).

Party time. Before the party, snack on some beef jerky, a protein shake or a handful of almonds and sip a cup of green tea. The fat and fiber from the almonds will reduce your appetite. The caffeine from the green tea will help keep you energized and increase mental alertness. If you're going to a party where healthy options will be limited, plan ahead and bring a healthy dish of your own for all to enjoy.

A great natural appetite suppressant and blood sugar stabilizer is mixing one tablespoon of apple cider vinegar with a small amount of water before meals. Once you're at the party, graze on veggies and guacamole, shrimp with cocktail sauce, chicken skewers or nuts and the healthy dish you brought to the party.

Sweet tooth? Save it for *after* a balanced meal and opt for some dark chocolate with at least [70 percent cocoa](#) content, strawberries dipped in dark chocolate or berries with heavy cream and cocoa nibs (one of my personal favorites), versus cookies, pies or cakes, which are full of unknown ingredients. If you choose to indulge in a treat, do so without guilt, take a small portion and limit yourself to 3-4 bits and enjoy every bite of it!

Alcohol. I'm all for socializing and enjoying a glass of wine or two. If your goal is to look good and feel your best, remember drinking too many calories from alcohol tends to be stored in the midsection and contributes to excess belly fat, [reduced testosterone](#), and disrupts sleep. Most liquor is made from corn or [wheat](#) and is double trouble for those with hidden food [allergies](#). Alcohol is metabolized before food in order to rid it from the body and lowers inhibitions and judgment causing one to indulge in excess eating.

If you're going to indulge in alcohol, opt for a [glass of red wine](#) or cocktails made from fresh ingredients. Beware of drinks such as white Russians or mudslide mixes which are full of sugar and contain up to 500-800 calories per drink. Drink plenty of [water](#) between each cocktail to prevent dehydration and it'll accomplish the social goal of having a glass in your hand while cutting down on the empty booze calories and the hangover!

Be accountable. [Keeping a journal](#) is one of the best ways to stay in check, be accountable and aware of what and how much you're actually eating and identify any emotions you may be experiencing. Those who journal what they eat tend to *lose twice as much weight* and make much healthier food choices versus those who do not keep a journal.

Remember, it's what you do consistently on a daily basis that matters most. Practice portion control. Graze, don't gorge. Say a silent prayer or gratitude and thanksgiving, chew your food thoroughly, set down your fork in between bites, and remember to take your [Digestzymes!](#)

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Wishing you a safe, happy and healthy holiday!

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