

HEALTHY EATING FOR CHRISTMAS

Don't go hungry!

Do not go shopping when you are hungry. You will be more inclined to purchase more food than you need when you are hungry. We often eat faster and more when we are hungry, therefore on Christmas Morning eat a wholesome breakfast to avoid overeating at the Christmas dinner.

Eat fresh food instead of processed food

Many processed foods are made with trans fats, saturated fats, and large amounts of sodium (salt) and sugar. It is important to eat more fresh food, especially for children as the vitamins and minerals from fresh food will aid their development.

Processed foods that are less healthy include **1.** Canned foods. **2.** White breads and pastas (whole grains versions are the healthier). **3.** Packaged high-calorie snack foods such as crisps. **4.** Chips. **5.** High-fat convenience foods such as cans of ravioli. **6.** Packaged cakes and biscuits. **7.** Sugary breakfast cereals. **8.** Microwaveable meals. **9.** Frozen fish fingers. **10.** Processed meats.

Processed meats are of particular concern. They are extremely high in fat and salt. Eating too much processed meats may increase your risk of colorectal, kidney and stomach cancer. Processed meats include hot dogs, bologna, sausage, packaged ham and other packaged lunch meats. Fresh meats, fish and hams from the butcher or meat counter in your supermarket is the healthier option. Processed foods pose no health risk in moderation. Problems only arise when they are eaten regularly.

Fruit and Vegetables for Children

Fruit and vegetables are a good source of vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre. Including more fruit and vegetables as part of a balanced diet will help your children grow and develop, improve vitality. It can be notoriously difficult to get some kids to eat the recommended ~~five~~ a day+ of fruit and veg. Research has shown that the more fruit and vegetables are available and easily accessible for children, the more likely they are to eat them. Therefore if fruit is chopped up and ready to eat, children will eat more of them. Providing a variety of different fruits and vegetables is one way to encourage your children towards healthy eating habits, however you must be patient. There is some evidence that children need to try new fruits and vegetables up to eight or nine times before they are liked or accepted. Being creative in the way you serve up fruit and vegetables can help. For example, prepare vegetables in different ways to vary the texture such as raw, microwaved, mashed, baked, grated into a casserole, blended up as a pasta sauce or as a soup. Fruit juice or fruit drinks should not be considered as a substitute for real fruit. Fruit juice is often regarded as a healthy choice as it contains Vitamin C. However one small glass (125 ml) is enough, more than this provides excess sugar and calories that can lead to weight gain.

Vitamin and mineral supplements should not be considered an alternative to a healthy diet. However, Whelehans Children's Tonic is a good option for those kids who won't eat enough fruit and veg. It is a natural tonic containing all the B vitamins and iron which

may be lacking in kids not fond of fruit and veg. It can help ensure they remain healthy over the winter.

Preparing healthier Christmas dinner

Use wholegrain breads for stuffing. Cook stuffing separate to the meat so it doesn't soak up fats during cooking. Try low fat ready-made gravy. Substitute light or low-fat spreads for butter when baking. Use yoghurt or buttermilk in baked goods, both low in fat and calories. Instead of high calorie cream sauces to go with meat and starters, try making vegetable puree ones like red pepper and onion. Turkey is the meat of choice for Christmas dinner. The good news is that turkey is low in fat. But try to avoid eating the skin because this is high in fat. Roast potatoes have a higher fat content than normal potatoes. However, if you cut them into larger chunks or use larger potatoes when cooking they will absorb less fat.

Moderation

Here are a few tips to help you cut down slightly over the Christmas. Use a smaller plate, your mind will consider it a full plate regardless of its size. Where there are choices, take a little of many things rather than lots of one thing. This ensures you are getting a balanced meal and not overloading on a fatty food. For every glass of alcohol or soft drink, have a glass of water. Water fills you up and helps wash out the excesses. Make your own mixed drinks with real fruit juice instead of canned drink. Only put out some of the available food so people don't over serve themselves. More can always come out as required. Try to eat slowly throughout the day to avoid that uncomfortable full feeling. It takes your brain a few minutes to realise you are full. If you feel full, try to resist the temptation to stuff in another mouthful! Take a break instead.

Afternoon Snacks

Instead of a bowl of sweets or chocolates, why not have a bowl of fruit such as cherries or grapes. Clementines, tangerines and satsumas are all rich in vitamin C. Nuts, dried figs and dates are good sources of a range of vitamins and minerals.

Do not crash diet

Many of us aim to lose weight as part of our New Year resolution. However, it is important not to crash diet. Most people that crash diet rebound with a stronger appetite than they had previously simply because their body still wants the higher amount of calories that it was used to before the diet. This leads to quick weight gain because by this point your metabolism is so slow that it can't burn the calories as fast as before. You end up gaining the weight that you lost right back in record time. Whelehans Pharmacy has a successful weight loss programme that aims for longer term weight loss. We give expert weight loss advice and information sheets along with weekly measurement of your weight.

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