

Reducing the effects of overindulgence this Christmas

Christmas time, mistletoe and wine! ...and mince pies, sweets, Christmas pudding, chocolates, wine, Christmas cake; I could go on. We want to enjoy the festive season, yet all too often, indulgence leaves us feeling heavy and bloated. Poor digestion is what causes waste gases and sluggish bowels, which in turn lead to bloating – the stomach feels uncomfortable, full and tight including a visibly rounded or bloated stomach.

Tips to reduce that bloated feeling this Christmas

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. Try to avoid eating the skin of the turkey as the skin 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

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.

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. Short term over indulgence on processed foods will lead to bloating, indigestion and sluggishness. However long term use will lead to obesity and associated complications like diabetes, heart disease and cancer.

Good bacteria

The word “probiotic” literally translates “for life”. The World Health Organisation (WHO) describes probiotics as “live organisms which when administered in adequate amounts confer a health benefit on the host”. The term “adequate amounts” is a term worth exploring more when it comes to probiotics. There are many probiotic ranges on the market but many of them have inadequate amount of live bacteria. Therefore when choosing a probiotic, it is very important to stick to a product that contains at least 10 million “good bacteria” from the lactobacillus or bifidobacteria families per dose. This is why choosing a scientifically proven probiotic like Optibac is important if you want to get the benefit of probiotics. The high sugar content of popular probiotic yogurts and drinks available in supermarkets counteracts the benefits of the probiotics. Optibac® range of probiotics is scientifically tested and proven, is sugar free and is available from Whelehans Pharmacy in Mullingar. Topping up your system with probiotics (aka good bacteria) will aid digestion, discouraging the production of waste gases, and help to reduce bloating, naturally.

Comfort this Christmas

In Whelehans, we encounter many who suffer from a heavy or bloating feeling after eating, in some cases even after only eating very little. We have discovered that OptiBac ‘For a flat stomach’® has been the solution for many people. This suggests that in many cases, these uncomfortable symptoms are simply caused by an imbalance in the natural microflora in the gut. For those suffering from regular abdominal discomfort after eating, I would suggest trying what I call the “Optibac test” to see if Optibac® probiotics can relieve your symptoms. This month, the influential and respected Health Science Institute in the UK recommended Optibac “For a flat stomach”® as a means of supporting your digestion and banishing bloating.

However, I would like to emphasise that abdominal bloating and discomfort can be due to numerous other causes like gastric oesophageal reflux disease, crohns disease, coeliac disease, food intolerance or irritable bowel disease, many of which will need medical assessment and can be successfully controlled.

Why choose Optibac?

OptiBac ‘For a flat stomach’® is a probiotic and prebiotic supplement specifically made for those with abdominal bloating. ‘For a flat stomach’ guarantees 5 billion probiotic microorganisms per daily dose, including acidophilus. The benefit of Optibac probiotics is that there is no need to refrigerate, no artificial sweeteners, colours or flavourings, there is significant research and documentation with each strain, the bacteria survive through your stomach acid and the number of live probiotics are guaranteed until expiry. OptiBac ‘For a flat stomach’® cost €7.89 per pack in Whelehans.

For comprehensive and free health advice and information call in to Whelehans or log on to www.whelehans.ie or dial 04493 34591.