

# HEALTHY EATING FOR CHRISTMAS

## **Don't go hungry!**

Do not go shopping when you're hungry. Supermarkets are experts at taking advantage of 'hungry' customers. When you enter the supermarket you notice the beautiful smell from the in store bakery. 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. This advice is true for any other day too.

## **Preparing a 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 or use half butter, half spread to get a rich flavour with less animal fat. 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 has the least amount of fat per serving, among all other meats. But try to avoid eating the skin because this is usually high in fat. The roast potato, an essential part of the traditional Christmas dinner. Potatoes are a starchy food containing carbohydrate, which gives us energy, as well as fibre and other important vitamins and minerals. 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.

## **Keeping the goodness of Vegetables**

Vegetables are good sources of important vitamins and minerals, with many of them being high in vitamin C, B vitamins such as folate, carotenes (which are turned into vitamin A in the body), potassium and magnesium. Eating a variety of at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day helps keep us healthy and may help protect us from heart disease and some cancers. Vegetables are low in fat and are a good source of fibre (which helps make meals more filling), by eating lots of them, you'll feel fuller for longer. You could try steaming your vegetables, rather than boiling them, this way they won't lose as many vitamins. If you do boil your veg, you could use the cooking water to make the gravy. This is also a good way of making healthy gravy because you won't need to use stock cubes, granules or powder, which all tend to be very high in salt.

## **Moderation**

Christmas is a time of excess. We can have the best intentions not to overeat and drink but with all the extra food and drink in the house it can be difficult not to over-indulge. Here are a few tips to help you cut down slightly

- 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, has no calories or side effects, is cheap and will help wash out the excesses.
- Help clear the table as soon as everyone finished eating rather than sitting and picking at leftovers.
- 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. This will give you a better idea when you've eaten enough. It takes your brain a few minutes to realize you are full.
- If you feel full, try to resist the temptation to stuff in another mouthful! Take a break instead
- In the afternoon you could go for a walk to help burn off a bit of that lunch.

### **Afternoon Snacks**

Christmas afternoon is the time we sit in front of the television and nibble on sweets and 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.

### **Reduce Salt**

Eating too much salt can raise your blood pressure and high blood pressure triples the risk of heart disease and stroke. So keep an eye on the amount of salt you're consuming and keep your heart healthy not just at Christmas but all year round.

### **Do not crash diet**

If you still need a little help, at Whelehans, our weight loss programme, Tone & Slim uses Conjugated Linoleic Acid (CLA) to aid people acquire their desired weight. Our formula of combining CLA along with regular consultations with a consultant nurse has proven very successful for people over the past year. It aims for longer term weight loss instead of dangerous crash diets.

**Disclaimer:** Please ensure you consult with your healthcare professional before making any changes recommended

**For comprehensive and free health advice and information call in to Whelehans, log on to [www.whelehans.ie](http://www.whelehans.ie) or dial 04493 34591.**