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# The Health Advisor

By Brooke Bennett

The holiday season is upon us! Big meals, decadent celebrations, holiday stress and exhaustion can push healthy eating and regular exercise to the bottom of our priority list. As many of us have heard over and over again, the risk for developing chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and stroke rises as we become more overweight and less physically active.

These two risk factors are of special significance because, for most people, they can be lowered through behavior and lifestyle changes. Other factors, such as having a family history of diabetes and belonging to certain racial or ethnic minority populations (including black and Hispanic groups) are also important indicators of risk. However, weight and physical activity level are things we can control. Making even simple changes can make a big difference to your health – especially during this season of indulgence!

Here are some **helpful tips** for managing the temptations that await us:

- Try eating a small healthy snack (a piece of fruit or cut-up vegetables) before you go to a holiday gathering. If you show up hungry can make it harder to choose sensibly and control portions.
- Avoid temptation. After filling your plate at a buffet, leave room or stand far away from the room that is filled with food. If you are sitting at a table of food, remove your plate when you are finished so that you are less likely to take seconds.
- If there are sweets in the office break room, don't go there. If you receive sweets or fattening food as a gift, bring them to the office or to a friend's house to share.
- Take a brisk walk after each holiday party or meal. Recruit family members and friends to join you. Remember, even a few minutes of exercise is better than no exercise at all.
- Lastly, don't give in to "all - or - nothing" thinking. If you "slip-up" or overindulge on a few occasions, don't get discouraged. It is never too late for a fresh start!

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