

The holidays are a special time filled with friends, family, fun and food. We gather to bake cookies and other special foods that invoke memories of past holidays. It seems there is just something about the holiday season that increases joy and, if we aren't careful, our waist circumference can increase as well. When the holidays are over, we tend to settle in for the winter and hibernate for the next three months with those newfound pounds staying put.

Studies show that the average American gains about one or two pounds during the winter months, with accumulation staying with us over the years. During the cold, wintery months this additional weight gain is typically the result of decreased exercise and increased eating. But, we can break that cycle and here are a few tips on how to get started:

- Do not skip meals. Skipping meals often leads to overeating later. Eating at regular times will keep hunger cues from getting out of control
- Using a smaller plate at mealtime allows you to put less food on your plate and encourages portion control
- In the buffet line, start by filling your plate with vegetables and salads before entrees and desserts
- Eat slowly and savor every bite
- Socialize away from the buffet table—having easy access can lead to mindless eating
- Take small "tastes" from the dessert table
- Be mindful of punches and alcoholic beverages that contain empty calories. The stress of holiday parties can cause you to drink or overeat, so be on guard and keep a glass of water in your hand
- Before you go back for seconds, wait 10 minutes to see if you are truly hungry
- Make time for exercise. You can burn 100 calories in just 10 minutes on the treadmill
- Socialize while staying fit by joining a friend on a walk or taking a yoga or group exercise class together
- Go outside for a walk, even if it's cold. Bundle up and head outside—you will feel better after a brisk walk!
- If you fall away from your plan, get back to the plan and re-engage your commitment to better health
- Take advantage of sunshine! Dreary skies can dampen our spirits. In the winter months we need to get outside and enjoy the sunshine. Your mood will instantly lift when you feel the sun on your face.
- Set a new goal each week while continuing your previous goals. If you do this over the winter months you will welcome spring as a healthier you.
- Take regular breaks. If you work in an office, get up and walk around once an hour or take a walk on your lunch hour. These little breaks actually help keep your mind sharper.

### **Cold-Weather Recipe Suggestion**

Try this stress free winter breakfast recipe for **Slow Cooker Overnight Oatmeal**:

8 cups water

2 cups steel cut oats (also called Irish Oatmeal)

1/3 cup dried cranberries

1/3 cup chopped dried apricots

¼ tsp. salt (optional)

Combine all ingredients in a 5 or 6 quart slow cooker. Turn the heat to low. Place lid on top and cook for 7-8 hours till oatmeal is creamy.

Feel free to eliminate or sub any of the dried fruits or add slivered almonds for added crunch.

1 cup = 193 calories, 3 gm fat, 35 gm carbohydrate, 6 gm protein, 78 mg sodium, 9 gm fiber

Adapted from Delish.com