

# to your health



Vitasoy

A newsletter about good  
foods for better health.

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## **WEIGHTY MATTERS**

In the New Year, tackle those extra holiday pounds to avoid obesity and health risks.

*By Suzanne Dixon MPH, MS, RD*

You may be surprised to learn that most Americans believe they gain more weight over the holidays than they actually do. Studies show that for most adults, weight gain between October and late February averages just over a pound, with most of the gain occurring between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. This information runs contrary to the popular belief that we gain between 5 and 10 pounds over the holidays. It is reassuring to know that less than 10% of Americans gain more than 5 pounds during this time.

Ready to celebrate? Not so fast. An average holiday weight gain of a pound may seem like nothing to worry about, but unfortunately, for most people, even a small gain means extra pounds in the long-term. Most of us don't lose the weight we've gained over the holidays during the remainder of the year. This means that the cumulative effect of even a small amount of yearly holiday weight gain can contribute to obesity and endanger health after just a few short years. Two pounds this year, one pound next, two pounds the year after that... you get the picture.

For this reason, avoiding holiday weight gain, even if it's just a pound or two, is an important part of preventing obesity and the diseases associated with it, including cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and stroke. Simply put, everyone needs a "weight maintenance plan" both during and after the holidays.

### **What if I already over-indulged?**

If you've already put on a few holiday pounds, don't panic. That is the past and what you need to focus on is the future. Unfortunately, many of us have a habit of focusing on what we wish we hadn't done, in this case,

overeat. Instead, what we need to do is think about the future and make positive decisions about what we can do to fix the problem. Let go of regret and get yourself moving, literally and figuratively, toward a healthier future.

Before you get started, keep the following five points in mind. Then read on for some practical ideas for getting back to your ideal body weight.

1. America is a toxic food environment. From vending machines to junk food commercials and those oh-so-delicious-smelling fast food places, we are constantly bombarded with messages – the sights, smells, and sounds – that tell us to eat. To eat healthfully in America takes commitment. If you are not committed, you will not succeed.
2. There is nothing easy about maintaining a healthy weight. If maintaining a healthy body weight were easy, two-thirds of American adults wouldn't be overweight. Those magazine stories promising weight loss in "three easy steps" or "without changing your diet" simply aren't telling the full story. Also keep in mind that when you see someone who looks fit, know that he or she works at it. Very few are born lucky when it comes to body weight.
3. Quality sleep will yield quality health. If you average less than about seven hours of sleep per night, your body is in distress. Logging fewer than seven hours of pillow-time encourages your body to produce cortisol and other stress-related hormones. Cortisol spurs hunger and tells your body to pile on the pounds.
4. Failure to exercise will lead to weight management failure. Being completely inactive allows virtually no room for error with your food. And where's the fun in that? If you don't exercise at least a little, you will have to be very strict with your diet to maintain a healthy body weight. That can be very difficult.

5. Be realistic about what it takes to burn calories. A walk around the block does not burn off a large pepperoni pizza. It takes a lot of exercise to burn even 500 calories. Your morning mocha latte and scone will set you back more than 500 calories. Use the chart below to understand the true connection between exercise and calories burned.

**A 155 pound person will burn approximately:**

Activity	Calories Burned Per Hour
Aerobics (high impact)	493
Aerobics (general)	422
Basketball Game	563
Basketball (lower intensity activity)	422
Bicycling (leisurely)	281
Bicycling (very vigorous)	704
Calisthenics (with vigorous effort)	563
Calisthenics (light to moderate effort)	317
Cleaning (with vigorous effort)	317
Cleaning (general house cleaning)	246
Dancing (fast)	422
Golf (carrying clubs and walking)	387
Jumping Rope (moderate effort)	704
Lawn mowing (push mower)	387
Racquetball (moderate intensity)	493
Racquetball (high intensity)	704
Raking the lawn	281
Rowing Machine (with moderate effort)	598
Running (6 mph = 10 minute mile)	704
Running (5 mph = 12 minute mile)	563
Shoveling snow (by hand)	422
Skiing (downhill with moderate effort)	422
Soccer (general)	493
Soccer (competitive)	704
Softball (recreational)	352
Swimming (laps, freestyle)	563
Swimming (laps, breast stroke)	704
Tennis (singles)	563
Tennis (doubles)	422
Walking (2 mph, slow pace)	176
Walking (3 mph, moderate pace)	246
Walking (4 mph, brisk pace)	281
Weight Lifting (moderate effort)	211

Physical activity information adapted from:  
<http://www.nutristrategy.com/activitylist.htm>

That's pretty eye-opening. Walk for a full hour at a moderate pace and you can indulge in half a piece of pumpkin pie. Keep that in mind when you pick and choose the treats you want to enjoy.

When tempted, complete the sentence, "I absolutely cannot live without trying some of the \_\_\_\_\_." Fill in the blank and if the food in front of you isn't an absolute favorite, skip it.

**Getting Back on Track**

If you're ready to tackle any holiday weight you may have gained, read on for some ideas on getting started.

**Eat a plant-based diet.** A pattern of eating in which most of your calories come from whole, minimally-processed plant foods including vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and legumes (beans) is not only healthy, but economical. An order of fries, which come from a plant but are anything but a whole plant food, will set you back about 500 calories and 25 grams of fat. Now picture 500 calories of apples, oatmeal or bean soup. With plant foods, you fill up with fewer calories. You can even replace some of your high calorie, high-fat meats with soy products such as tofu.

**Drink water.** Drink water before each meal and snack. Drink water throughout the day. Water fills you up, which is helpful for weight loss, but even more important, staying well-hydrated will help your brain and body know when it's truly hungry for food, rather than just a little dehydrated.

**Set behavior-based goals.** People who set behavior-based goals have more success with weight loss. Instead of aiming for a size 6, aim for a specific behavior, such as taking a walk on your lunch hour, or replacing that afternoon vending machine raid with an apple and handful of nuts that you bring from home.

**Realign your reasons for losing.** Why you lose weight is as important as how. People who lose weight only to fit into a smaller size are more likely to gain that weight back than people who lose weight to be healthier, lower blood pressure or blood sugar, have more energy, or any other health-based reason.

**Get Moving.** Weight maintenance without exercise is nearly impossible. Studies tell us that it may be easy to lose weight with diet alone, but not so for maintaining

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that loss. It's simple math: less body mass means less calories burned. As you lose, if you don't begin to burn some calories with physical activity, you will have to eat less and less and less to maintain that loss. Not only is this difficult, but it's no fun!

**Stop drinking your calories.** Our bodies are designed to obtain calories from food, not liquid. We are wired for water. While an occasional glass of wine or beer is fine, steer clear of fruit drinks, soda, energy drinks, and full fat coffee beverages, all of which will break the calorie bank.

While weight loss isn't easy, it is possible. A few tweaks to your diet routine can yield big results. We all are focused on "living lean" due to the economic slow-down; it's an ideal time to live lean, in body, too!

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Suzanne Dixon, an epidemiologist and registered dietitian, is the creator of the award-winning website [www.CancerNutritionInfo.com](http://www.CancerNutritionInfo.com). Suzanne is an internationally recognized expert in chronic disease prevention, public health, nutrition, and epidemiology and has authored numerous scholarly and popular literature publications. She has delivered over 150 invited lectures to professional and consumer audiences and has taught medical, nursing, and public health coursework at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. Suzanne developed and taught new coursework in complementary and alternative medicine at Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti, Michigan and has published chapters in biological sciences textbooks. Suzanne is the recipient of the 2005 American Dietetic Association Foundation Award for Innovative Nutrition Education Programs for the Public for her website [www.CancerNutritionInfo.com](http://www.CancerNutritionInfo.com). As well, [CancerNutritionInfo.com](http://www.CancerNutritionInfo.com) was named one of *Time Magazine's* 50 Coolest Websites of 2005 and received excellent reviews in the *New York Times* in July of 2004. Suzanne is the recipient of the 2004 Distinguished Practice Award from the Oncology Nutrition Dietetic Practice Group of the American Dietetic Association. She received her training in epidemiology and nutrition at the University of Michigan, School of Public Health at Ann Arbor.

**About Vitasoy USA Inc.**

A pioneer in bringing organic and all-natural tofu and soymilk to America, Vitasoy USA Inc. is committed to producing delicious, innovative foods that promote health and well being. Look for it's premium tofu, soymilk, Asian-style noodles and wraps, and non-dairy sandwich spreads under the brand names Vitasoy® and Nasoya®. For further information, fast and easy recipe ideas, or to sign up for Vitasoy's educational newsletters, please visit [www.vitasoy-usa.com](http://www.vitasoy-usa.com).