



By Kaylie Cochrane, OSCAR Care Group Dietitian

The silly season is almost upon us which means celebrations! This is a time where we catch up with friends and family to celebrate the year that has passed and this often involves food and drinks.

These celebrations can often have a negative effect on our health whether it be over indulging in Christmas feasts or enjoying one too many drinks on New Year's Eve.

An American study conducted in 2006 identified that the **weight gained during holiday seasons usually occurs around the midsection**. Weight gain in this area is associated with an increased risk of diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Staying on top of your diet and physical activity levels this holiday season may not be as difficult as you think!



On the following pages, we share over **20 free tips** on how to enjoy a **balanced, healthy holiday season**.

Trips

- **Play** with your children/grandchildren on trips – go outside with them, go exploring, play games and have fun!
- Go for **walks or bike rides** as a family/ group of friends after an evening meal.
- Use **facilities** available to you on your trip – for example pools, tennis courts and bike hire.
- Pack some **healthy snacks** for long car trips to avoid ordering takeaway along the way.



Gifts

- Why not give a gift that encourages friends or family to **get active**? A football or cricket set is a great way to encourage friends and family to play outdoors while being active together! Christmas in Australia is a great time of year to head down to the beach and get active.
- Give a book of your own **recipes** to family & friends, they can enjoy cooking different healthy options!

- **Cooking equipment** as a gift will encourage friends or family to make healthy meals from scratch! Our Partners at **Robot Coupe** sell some great Christmas gifts!
- Give friends or family some **seeds and gardening equipment** to cultivate their own garden of veggies or herbs and spices.
- A personal favourite of mine – give the **gift of tea** this Christmas there are many specialty tea shops that cater a wide variety of choices from traditional to fruity or herbal.
- A voucher to a **cooking class** is a wonderful way to increase cooking skills and confidence in the kitchen.
- Give family and friends some **homemade** jam, pickles or salad dressings in jars.



Parties

- Don't starve yourself all day because you know you will be having a big celebration meal at night – it is important to eat a **balanced diet** and maybe even try having a healthy snack before the party such as some fruit or yoghurt that way you won't be as tempted by the energy dense treats on offer.
- **Dance!** – Dancing at a holiday celebration will help burn off any additional treats that you do consume. It might also help you to stay away from the food table!
- Remember to consider the **serving size** of meals. Sometimes it is easy to get carried away with extra discretionary items during a celebratory meal. Remember that your plate should be filled with half salad or veggies, one quarter carbohydrate, such as potato or rice, and one quarter protein such as ham, chicken or turkey.
- Opt for the **lower kilojoule foods** first – instead of going straight for the chips or chocolate eat some veggie sticks with dip or some fruit. If you're unsure if your party will have healthy options why not take some with you! Bring a fruit platter to share or some veggie skewers with cheese.

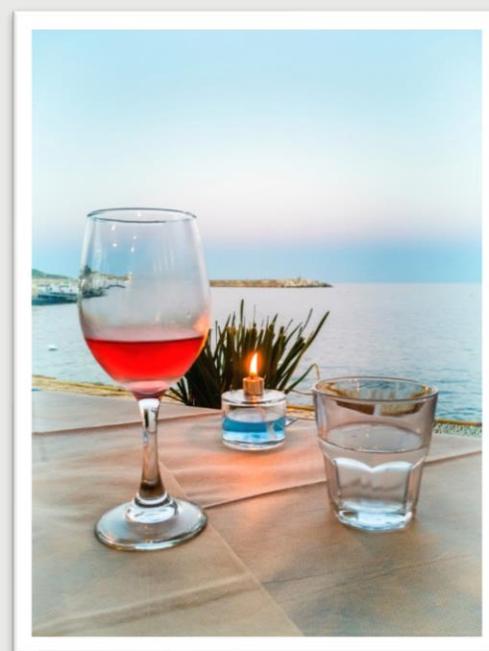


- Some foods to limit at parties and celebrations and some foods that are better to enjoy:

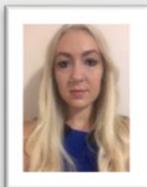
Foods to limit	Foods to enjoy
Creamy dips	Veggie sticks and rice crackers
Pies, sausage rolls and spinach triangles	Hummus, beetroot, tzatziki and avocado dip
Chips	Sushi
Cakes and slices with cream	Sandwiches
Lollies, candy canes, chocolates	Fruit salad with yoghurt

Alcohol

- Alcohol is very energy dense & can leave us feeling unwell the next day. Enjoy alcohol in moderation by alternating alcoholic drinks with non-alcoholic drinks. **1 large glass of wine (250mL) contains the same amount of energy (kJ's) as an ice cream?** After many drinks over the duration of an evening – those kJ's add up, resulting in the equivalent energy as if you had eaten multiple ice creams!
- Enjoy at least **two alcohol free days** every week.
- Watch the **serving size**. Some wine glasses can be three times the standard serve.
- Be careful with **top-ups** as they can lead to you losing count of the amount you have been drinking. Finish one glass before accepting a top-up.
- **Eat prior** to arriving at the celebration to prevent yourself from overconsuming alcohol as eating fills up the stomach with food rather than filling up on drinks and excess calories.
- Alternate between having an alcoholic drink & **water**, to help with hydration & prevent you from overconsuming alcohol.



And finally, the holidays are a time to enjoy good food and good company, it is not a time to feel guilty about the foods we consume. Remember everything in moderation and ensure that when you do indulge you take the time to enjoy it! As long as you take the time to enjoy physical activity and balanced nutrition over the holidays you will be setting yourself up for a healthy year to come!



Need help with making healthy lifestyle choices?

This article was written by OSCAR Care Group Dietitian, Kaylie Cochrane. Please call or email via our contact details below.

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