

If it's wrapped nice and looks good — look out

(It's probably fattening)

The most popular holidays of the year — Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah and New Year's Day — are associated with gift-giving, parties, good cheer and spending a little extra time with the children. But for many of us, this joyful time of year can be followed by a period of frustration and guilt as a result of the eating binges and family feasts we all fall prey to at this most festive, food-oriented time of the year.

"It isn't easy to watch your calories while everyone around you is munching on candy canes and potato latkes, but the first step is to have a positive attitude," suggest Toni Marotta and Lolly Wurtzel, co-founders of a weight control organization.

With 14 years experience in the weight-control field, Marotta and Wurtzel have both successfully overcome their own "battles of the bulge," and have some helpful tips for holiday dieters.

DON'T BE afraid to say "no" (politely) when offered rich and gooey confections or second helpings — your friends and relatives won't take offense, they'll admire you and possibly refrain from grabbing that second helping of peppernusse themselves.

Continue to choose foods from the six basic food groups — protein, vegetable, bread, fruit, milk, oils and condiments — and stick with the same well-

balanced meals you prepare for your family the rest of the year.

Refrain from buying cakes, breads, and candy that seem particularly enticing because they are wrapped in pretty holiday packaging. If at all possible, try not to shop for food at the last minute. Between the bustling crowds and too many things on your mind, a couple of extra pies and cakes may find their way into your shopping cart "just in case."

WATCH WHAT you drink. Holiday time is the only time of year when "making merry" means office parties, family get-togethers and toasts of good wishes for the new year. Those extra glasses of wine with dinner, apple cider with the kids, warm toddies before bed and spiked punch with co-workers can add up to extra pounds around your midsection.

Remember to drink at least four to eight glasses of water per day. Try a wine spritzer or a glass of Perrier if you feel more at ease with a drink in your hand. And watch the hot chocolate. Winter afternoons indoors with the kids can be lethal; substitute black coffee or tea or one of the many herbal teas instead.

"FROM personal experience, we know that losing weight and maintaining the proper weight can be monumental tasks," says Marotta.



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