





## PREVENTING HOLIDAY **WEIGHT GAIN**

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♪ **IT'S THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR!** The holiday season consists of nearly 2 months of parties, office gatherings and family dinners. Extra calories are lurking everywhere: sugar cookies at work, eggnog and alcohol at your office party, pumpkin pie for Thanksgiving dessert, extra helpings of stuffing on Christmas Eve and chocolates in your Christmas stocking. How do you resist all these temptations, especially when everyone else is indulging? The question is: Do you want to gain weight like everyone else too?

By the time Christmas rolls around, your plans to exercise more may have fallen through, especially when faced with the time constraints of the busy holiday season. If you are like most North Americans, you will gain 1-2 pounds by New Year's Day. Research published in the New England Journal of Medicine suggests that this small holiday weight gain is seldom lost and contributes to a cumulative lifetime weight gain.

Rather than waiting until January 1st to hit the gym and reverse the damage, be prepared for the holiday season with a nutrition and fitness plan. When you are prepared, you can still enjoy your favorite holiday treats without sabotaging your fitness goals. ➔

SARA'S

# HOLIDAY GUIDELINES



## 1. BE POLITE AND BE PREPARED

Many times you will feel forced to eat food because people keep putting it in front of you. Here are a few of my strategies for saying no politely: "No thank you, I couldn't possibly eat another bite, everything was delicious". If someone tries to put food on my plate before eating has commenced, then I resort to "Oh, that looks wonderful but unfortunately I am allergic to that so I will regretfully have to pass".

If I know I am going to a restaurant for an office party with a pre-set menu, I contact the restaurant in advance to ensure my dietary requirements can be accommodated.

My friends, family and coworkers are respectful of my lifestyle choice. I do not question their food choices, nor do I expect them to accommodate my diet. I always arrive at my destinations with a cooler containing my meals. If I stay on track the majority of the time, then I am able to get away with indulging in moderation.

## 2. HOLIDAY EXERCISE STRATEGIES:

To burn off those extra calories, kick up your exercise. If you exercise for 30 minutes a day, increase it to 45 minutes. If you exercise three times a week, move it up to five times a week.

Because of time constraints during the holidays, I rely on HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training) for my cardio. HIIT helps me burn fat faster with less time in the gym. Less time in the gym means more time with my family.

Some people use the following excuse: when I'm away from home, I don't have access to a gym. Unless your relatives live in the middle of nowhere, you can always find a gym. Worst case, pack a jump rope for cardio and use your own body weight or a resistance band for strength training. When I am at my sister's house, I jump rope in her garage, or I bundle up and run outside. Inside, she let's me do burpees, push-ups, pike-jacks, etc in her living room.

Schedule your cheat days into your calendar such as your holiday office party and dinners on Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas, Chanukah and New Year's Eve.

If you know you are having a heavy carbohydrate-rich, high calorie meal, then workout beforehand. More specifically, lift weights using a higher repetition range so you will deplete more of your muscle glycogen stores. Then when you eat your heavy meal, rather than being stored as body fat, the carbohydrates will replenish your muscle glycogen levels and help you get better results from your workout. Why not take advantage of your holiday meal and turn it into a muscle-building feast?

Rather than having dessert after a big holiday meal, put it in a doggie bag and have it as your post-workout meal another day when your body is ready to soak up simple carbohydrates immediately after a workout. Or another option is to go for a walk after dinner, then have dessert.

If you do overeat, then the next day, be sure to do more cardio and cut back on your carbohydrate or fat intake.



### 3. HOLIDAY NUTRITION STRATEGIES

My mom and sister never exercise and can eat whatever they want whenever they want in supersized portions without gaining any weight. My sister is 5'10 and 115 pounds and my mom is 5'7" and 130 pounds. We all had the same eating style; however, I received the "short and fat end of the genetic stick" and ballooned up to 140 pounds at 5'6" after I graduated from university. Thanks to adopting a healthy lifestyle, I have since lost 20 pounds.

I have learned many tricks to survive a week with a family that does not exercise and only eats candy and junk food. So keep reading to learn how I managed to maintain my 20-pound weight loss despite my family's antagonistic lifestyle.

#### SARA'S TRICKS:

**a)** Never arrive at a party hungry because it increases the likelihood you will overindulge. If you know you are going to have a big meal, have a small protein snack beforehand. Snack on appetizers like shrimp, walnuts, almonds and cashews at the party, or make a protein shake or scramble some egg whites at home before you leave. Protein wards off hunger signals and will prevent you from overeating at the party.

**b)** If you are going to someone else's house for dinner, bring a healthy dish to share such as a salad, a veggie or fruit tray or a shrimp platter. This not only gives you brownie points for the nice gesture, but it also ensures you will have at least one healthy item you can eat.

**c)** Appetizers: Use a small plate when selecting appetizers. A small portion of appetizers may help prevent you from overeating at dinner. Select vegetables and shrimp. Avoid creamy dips, crackers, nachos, salted nuts, cheese, chips, and luncheon meats. Never go back for seconds. If you are tempted to go back for seconds, chew some sugar-free gum and have a glass of water to fill your belly.

**d)** Main Course: At holiday meal time, fill  $\frac{3}{4}$ s of your plate with salad, vegetables and lean protein such as skinless chicken or turkey, fish, seafood, or lean beef. Save the remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  of your plate for calorie-dense starchy delicacies. Try to avoid creamy sauces, gravy and cheesy toppings. For salads, use oil and vinegar, vinaigrette or low-fat dressings. My mom makes a separate batch of vegetables for me without sauces, sodium or butter. This way I feel much less guilty when I indulge in some of her delicious stuffing.

**e)** Dessert: It is ultimately you who decides how much food goes into your mouth. If you are constantly bombarded with desserts and candy, you can still prevent overeating and weight gain. Allow yourself one small serving of a treat each day during the holiday season. Portion control is the key to not depriving yourself of your favourite treat. Remember that you may have to compensate for it later in the day by reducing your total caloric intake or by burning a few extra calories while exercising.

The best dessert choices are fruit, dark chocolate or angel food cake. If you must have a dessert with sugary frosting, butter cream, milk chocolate chips, or cream cheese, then limit yourself to 1 thin slice of cake, 1 cookie or 1 brownie. You are wiser to take a small portion of a single dessert rather than piling your plate with many desserts you want to sample (because you will inevitably eat them all!).

Another option is to bring your own home-made healthy dessert. This will deter you from eating more fattening desserts at the table.

**f)** Limit Your Consumption of Alcohol: Be sure to try and avoid drinking alcohol at holiday parties, especially if you are a designated driver. Not only does alcohol add extra empty calories, but it also stimulates your appetite and reduces your willpower to food. If you must drink, then limit yourself to 1-2 servings and select wine or light beer rather than a 350 calorie glass of Eggnog. I personally abstain from alcohol and only drink water, green tea or protein shakes.

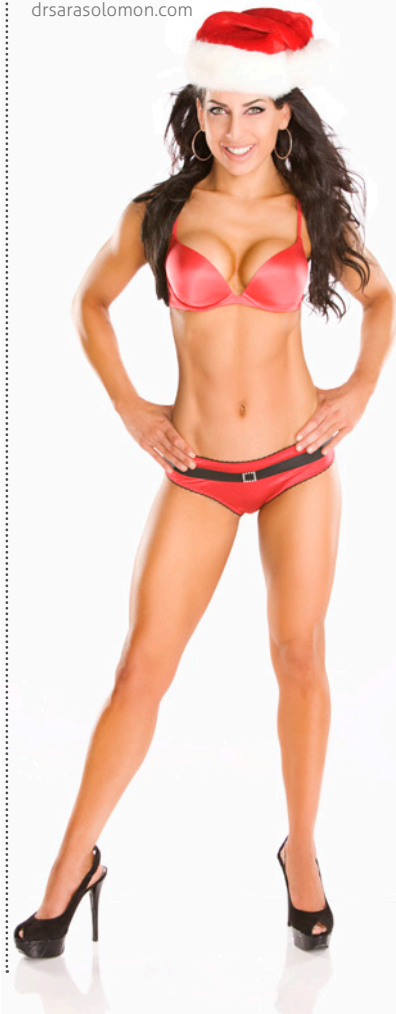
**g)** Don't forget that increasing your intake of daily fiber, protein, and essential fatty acid consumption (ie. Flaxseed oil, walnuts, almonds, fish oil, avocados etc) will help you lose fat.

**h)** Remember to eat slowly and savor the food. My Granny lived in England during The Second World War. She told me that, at the time, the food supplies were very limited, so the government health officials advised citizens to chew more slowly, and at least thirty-two times before swallowing as a strategy to make them feel satiated with less food. My grandfather always advised that we put our fork down between every bite. These are great strategies to implement to put you in control of your food.

**i)** Have fun! There is so much more to the holiday season than just food! Don't equate parties as food extravaganzas. They should be perceived as a time to enjoy conversations with friends and family. →

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Sara is also a WBFF PRO Fitness Model, author of Oxygen Magazine's "Work Train Compete" blog, a cover girl, a certified personal trainer, a SPINNING® instructor, a physiotherapist, a certified jump rope specialist with the Jump Rope Institute, a university and continuing education lecturer, a published author and a photographer. To learn more about Sara, please visit her website at [drsarasolomon.com](http://drsarasolomon.com)



# SARA'S PUMPKIN PIE

## NUTRITION FACTS

Serves 8: serving size: 1/8 slice of pie.

RECIPE	CALORIES	FAT	SATURATED FAT	CHOLESTEROL	SODIUM	CARBOHYDRATES	FIBER	SUGARS	PROTEIN
Sara's Pumpkin Pie	190	13g	0.9g	0mg	19.4mg	12g	3.5g	6g	9g
Regular Pumpkin Pie	323	15g	2.7g	65mg	434mg	42g	4.2g	21g	6g

**ALTHOUGH DELICIOUS**, traditional holiday Pumpkin Pie is laced with butter, sugar, salt, flour and shortening – all ingredients that will sabotage your fitness goals.

Despite common misconceptions, you can cook and bake healthy alternatives for your holiday meals that are physique-friendly and equally tasty! I served my low calorie, low carbohydrate, low sugar, cholesterol-free, low sodium pumpkin pie to my family. They LOVED it! And the best part.... We didn't have to loosen our belts a notch after eating it! Give it a whirl and let me know what you think!

## Ingredients

### Crust

- » 2 scoops graham cracker whey protein isolate (zero carb)
- » 1/4 cup raw pecan halves
- » 2 Medjool dates

### Filling

- » 1 cup raw pecan halves
- » 1 14oz. can of pumpkin
- » 1 tbsp water
- » 1 pinch of salt
- » 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- » 1 scoop Caramel Caress Stevia by Fitlicious (from melissatucker.com)
- » 1 scoops graham cracker whey protein isolate (zero carb)
- » 1 tbsp pumpkin pie spice
- » 1/2 cup of raisins (optional)

## Method:

1. Place ingredients for the crust in a food processor. Moisten with water and then mix.
2. Press the crust mixture into a pie plate to form the crust.
3. Place filling ingredients into a food processor and blend well.
4. Pour filling mixture into the pie plate.
5. Place the pie in the freezer. Remove 1 hour prior to serving.



Historically, Native Americans used **pumpkin seeds** as both a food and for medicinal purposes. Their primary use as a parasite remedy is well documented in Native American history. This became so well documented that during the late 1800s to early 1900s, the United States pharmacopoeia listed pumpkin seeds as an official medicine for the treatment of parasites.



**Vanilla** first left Mexico in the early 1500s on ships bound for Spain. It was originally believed only to have value as a perfume. It wasn't until Cortes arrived in 1519 that the Spaniards learned it was also a flavor.







### CONCLUSION:

Enjoy and celebrate the holidays with your family and friends. There will be times when you will and should succumb to temptation. But beating yourself up about it will only make you eat more. By implementing the above-mentioned strategies you will be able to successfully negotiate the holidays, minimize overeating and adhere to your fitness regime. Stay aware: 80% of your fitness results are contingent upon your nutrition, meaning you are what you eat! **R&F**