



Fighting Fit

Fitness and Fat Loss Training Specialists

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5 Strategies for “Damage Control” over the Christmas Holidays

The Christmas holidays are undoubtedly a time of celebration, where family and friends get together and enjoy the festive cheer. But for some, the Christmas Spirit is dampened by the thought of having to enter the New Year carrying the excess weight often gained around this time of year. The average weight gain over the Christmas and New Year period is assumed to be around 10lbs – no wonder we hate Santa Claus!

However, it doesn't have to be this way. Below we have a few strategies that can serve to limit the amount of weight gain you see over Christmas. Use these tips and you will enter the New Year with a far more positive self-image, taking you one step closer to achieving that ideal figure in 2012.

1. Plan Ahead!

At Fighting Fit, we use the “90% rule” with all our clients and their nutrition plans. If you are consuming 5 meals per day (which you should be in order to keep your metabolism high for fat loss) then that equals 35 meals per week. Over the two week festive period, this totals as 70 meals. A quick calculation tells us that 90% of 70 = 63. This means that out of 70 meals consumed over the two week period, 63 should be healthy, nutritious meals used to fuel & change your body. The remaining 7 meals are your “splurges”, where you can let loose and enjoy your favourite foods without guilt or hesitation.

Once you have worked out your number of “splurges”, get out a calendar and mark with a big fat X where you want to use up your 7 splurges over the two weeks. For example, you might have one on your staff Christmas party, one or two on Christmas Day and another on New Year's Eve. It doesn't matter when you decide to use your splurges – they can be 7 days in a row or spread out over the two weeks. The rest of the time, eat healthy foods such as lean proteins, fruits and vegetables that fuel your body. By planning when to indulge, it becomes far easier to eat well around these times, as you have a special treat to look forward to and “save up” for. You automatically limit your consumption of unhealthy foods and actually end up appreciating the “splurges” far more by using this method.

2. Keep a Food Diary

It's a fact that if we are asked to recall how much food we have eaten in a day, we tend to vastly under-estimate if using memory alone. Keeping a written food diary and reviewing it at the end of each day will help to make you aware of just how much food is slipping past those lips – and it might surprise you! If you find yourself drifting towards the chocolate tin or biscuit barrel, grab your diary and have a look at how much you have already consumed that day. It will make you realise that actually you're not "hungry" when you go hunting for food – often it's just habit that leads us towards the kitchen. A food diary brings your sub-conscious to a conscious level and makes you realise that you don't really want that extra portion because, in reality, your body has already had enough.

3. Keep Training!

This is absolutely NOT the time of year to drop your workouts and training sessions. And if you don't currently train, it's a GREAT time to start! The reason you can have 7 splurges over the two week period and get away with it is because you are still challenging your body with intense workouts and keeping your metabolism high and revving. Remember, using resistance training (training with weights) as part of a well-designed fat loss programme helps to deplete muscles glycogen levels and increase insulin sensitivity, meaning that a lot of the carbs and "bad" food you eat over Christmas time end up getting used to help you recover from your workouts instead of being stored as body fat. Why wait to the New Year to join a gym? Start now and get one step up on the January crowd.

4. Don't Sabotage Yourself!

So we've already planned out our splurges and things are going well. We're eating a nutritious diet of lean proteins, fruit and vegetables 90% of the time. Then all of a sudden, you drop into a fuzzy haze and when you wake up, you've eaten half a pack of hobnobs or a handful of Quality Street! How do you react? Unfortunately, a lot of people say "That's it – I've messed up, may as well just blow the whole thing now and eat whatever I want". But really this is a massive over reaction and is akin to throwing the baby out with the bath water.

Think about it. Imagine you are driving down a road and one of your tires burst. You're forced to pullover. Now, do you A.) Replace the tire with a spare and get back on the road or B.) Walk around your car and burst the other 3 tires? Most normal people choose A – to replace the one burst tire right? So why, if you make a slip up with your diet, do you then go and blow the whole thing? Keep things in perspective – if you make an error, simply get back on track with your next meal, get back on the road and you will be fine.

5. Embrace the Christmas Spirit and Give!

A lot of us will get inundated with boxes of chocolate and sweets as gifts at this time of year. My advice? Leave them wrapped up, switch the label and give them AWAY as presents yourself! We do this every year – we keep one or two boxes max for the kids to tuck into and simply give any others we received as presents to others. This way, you won't find yourself facing a mountain of chocolate tins calling you over every 5 minutes. And you come across as really generous to all the people you pass the choc's onto as well, so it's win-win!

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