Just the Facts

Please: Do Americans REALLY Gain Weight Over the Holidays?

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You see them everywhere this time of year - magazines already warning you about how many pounds you’re going to gain from the end of Thanksgiving to the first of the year - and a list of tricks to avoid. Ironically some of the same covers have glorious pictures of rich desserts, appetizers, and bountiful tables that just beg you to buy and try the recipes. We’re a conflicted lot aren’t we?

What is the truth about holiday weight gain? Do Americans really gain 5-10 lbs. over the holidays? If 5-10 lbs. is say, average, then some of us may be gaining 20 (shudder!). As I tell my students, look to the science please. A quick review of journals never led me to research that supported the extreme weight gain claims despite the repeated scares in media. I did however discover an old abstract on research published in the New England Journal of Medicine from 2000 that reviewed this very issue. The outcome: The participants gained a little less than one pound from the end of November to the first of January. Another study from Oklahoma revealed just over a pound on average. The researchers pointed to concerns though, that over a decade, slow but subtle weight gain IS contributing to the obesity in our nation.

If a pound really is a problem how does this translate into food & calories? For the 5½ weeks between Thanksgiving and New Years Day this would mean about an extra 100 cals consumed per day on average. Doesn’t sound like much huh? Your body’s daily calorie expenditure is a lot like your checkbook budget: there is a limited amount to spend (consume) before you start going into debt (or fat gain). And like going into debt, there is an extra price to pay - more physical activity or future calorie restriction.

Being a “glass is half full” kinda person I’m glad it’s a little less than a pound on average. We can handle that! So what do we need to be more aware of?

• Consider and be mindful that the holiday season saturates our senses with food: images in publications, media, and even the seasonal kiosks in the shopping malls! Some people have the ability to tune out the food “noise” and eat normally. Others are overstimulated by sights and smells and have difficulty with self control. Some researchers believe that this issue alone during the holiday season may predispose people to overeat in the absence of true feelings of hunger. How are YOU affected?

• Look to those people who are successful at maintaining weight. What do they do consistently? They MOVE! Exercise seems to be a critical factor in keeping people on track. Reframe
Happy Holidays to Your Make-up and Hair!

As the holidays approach, demands on your time can take away from your glam! These are just a few tips for enhancing your holiday looks:

1. Evade the fade: Few things fade hair color faster than the wrong shampoo. Be sure to use a shampoo and conditioner formulated for color treated hair that won’t deplete your hue.

2. It’s your gloss: Gloss can preserve the life and look of your hair. Gloss will condition the hair and enhance sheen. This gives the hair a healthier appearance and a smooth finish.

3. Add a pop of pizzazz: Eye catching hair accessories such as flowers, pony tail hair additions, wigs, headbands, and hair jewelry can all personalize your holiday look.

4. Love the glitter: The sparkly stuff demands beauty bravado. Glitter can go on the eyes, lips, arms, shoulders, and other peek-a-boo areas on the body. Have fun with it.

5. The lips are the focal point of the face: Don’t shy away from candy apple reds (goes great with a little glitter), berries, plums, and of course a little gloss on top.

6. Emphasize the eyes: Eye color or shadow make the eyes appear brighter and more expressive. A darker shade of color makes the natural color of the iris appear lighter, while a lighter shade makes the iris appear deeper. Eye makeup color may match or coordinate with clothing color. Remember the glitter for the eyes go great during the holiday season.

Rule of thumb: Never play up BOTH the eyes and the lips. Have fun and happy holidays!

The Why and How of Becoming A Vegetarian

Dr. Karen Less

More than 12 million people in the U.S. are vegetarians. A vegetarian consumes only animal products such as milk, eggs, cheese, honey, and others from live animals. A vegan is a type of vegetarian who does not eat any animal products. People choose to become vegetarian for a variety of reasons. Many religions require their practitioners not to eat meat, but there are many other compelling reasons to consider becoming a vegetarian.
The holidays from the Pet's view:

On the first day of Christmas my owners gave to me; one large, lit tree. I first tried chewing on the electrical cords. The burn on my tongue will be a permanent reminder to me of this holiday. The cat couldn’t resist the hanging ornaments. She got the wire hanger stuck in her throat and our owners had to make a trip to the emergency clinic to have it removed. The tree also looked like a good place to relieve myself when my owners were visiting Aunt Sarah and Uncle Dell. I mean, it’s a “tree” right? (They were gone for hours.) Apparently, this tree is not a tree in the true sense of the word, it was the first “bad dog” night.

On the second day of Christmas my owners gave to me; lots of brightly wrapped presents, piled under the tree. The floor is my domain, usually, so I thought they were for me. While my owners were at the company Christmas party, I got bored and “opened” the gifts. Turned out they weren’t for me after all. I ate the paper and a paint set. The cat really liked that curly ribbon on the presents. She ate the ribbon. We got to see the nice staff at the emergency clinic. The second “bad dog” night.

On the third day of Christmas my owners gave to me; one ugly sweater, a set of reindeer antlers and several large rawhide chews. While they were at the children’s school play, I figured I’d put the antlers and sweater to good use and used them as a chew toy (I’ll save the rawhide for later). I saw the cat laughing as they took me out the door to the emergency vet. One surgery and several hours later, all of the stuffing and yarn was removed from my stomach. The third “bad dog” night was spent in the hospital. We’re on a first name basis with the staff at the veterinary emergency clinic now.

On the fourth day of Christmas my owners gave to me; another night alone as they went Christmas caroling. I decided to eat the rawhides. And me not yet healed from my last culinary mistake. My owners were happy though, they thought nothing was wrong and so they gave me a “treat” for being good. Fudge brownies sounded good but didn’t mix well with rawhide. I left portions of the brownies and rawhide on the carpet. It was a “bad dog” morning come daylight.

On the fifth day of Christmas my owners gave to me; some really cold weather. As my owners left for more celebrating that night, they decided I should stay outside. Unfortunately, I’d been groomed recently to look good for the holidays. When my water bowl froze over, I had nothing to drink and it was so cold. Good thing they came home before I got frostbite. It was a near miss.

On the sixth day of Christmas my owners gave to me; candles on the mantle. They did look pretty but the cat likes to get to those high places. Luckily my owners were home. I could have died. The cat knocked the candle off, now there’s wax and a burn mark on the carpet. My owner’s mad because of what Aunt Lucy will think. Don’t know what that means, I just know she’s mad. It was a “bad cat” night.

On the seventh day of Christmas my owners gave to me; wonderful smells of turkey. The carcass ended up in the trash. I couldn’t help myself, the carcass was there in front of me, I only had to dig a bit to get it out. I thought the bones would be good for my teeth. Wrong again. Hello, emergency staff.

On the eighth day of Christmas my owners gave to me; a visit from Auntie Betty who hates me. I was in the basement. I wanted to get out. I hate Aunt Betty, too. I tried to bite her when little Robbie let me out. My owners said something about a “last straw.”

On the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th days of Christmas my owners gave to me; a stay in a crowded, lousy kennel. Since they didn’t make reservations early, I’m in a not-so-nice facility, in a cage. All the good places were already booked up. Next year I hope they think ahead. I really hate the holidays!!
Cranberries: Tiny, Mighty, & Good!

At one time the cranberry was relegated to a gelatinous tubular form served on the tables of Americans every Thanksgiving Day. No longer! This humble berry is joining the ranks of “super food” status and culinary creativity!

The United States can actually claim cranberries as one of only three foods indigenous to our nation. Used by Native Americans, cranberries were introduced nearly 400 years ago to immigrants. Once seen as only a holiday staple, these berries are now being introduced in new ways at the table. Check out any grocery store or bistro and you will find them year round in salads, relishes, specialty breads, cocktails, juice blends, and dried versions in many flavored forms.

Cranberries have long been touted as a treatment and preventive measure for urinary tract infections. At first it was believed that cranberries fought bacteria by acidifying the urine. Research though, is showing that unique compounds in the cranberry called proanthocyanins actually create a kind of “slick surface” on the walls of the urinary tract. This makes it difficult for harmful germs to stick and set up an infection. This exceptional benefit doesn’t limit itself to the nether region of our bodies. Cranberries may extend their antibacterial benefits to the gums and the prevention of periodontal disease! The health preserving effects don’t stop there - new research is examining the LDL cholesterol lowering role, anti-inflammatory benefits, and cancer cell inhibition of this mighty berry.

If you avoided cranberries because of the tart flavor, revisit the new versions of the product. Cranberry juice is currently available blended with other healthy juice varieties. Dried cranberries are now flavored with pomegranate, orange, or cherry - mix them with whole grain granola cereals for a snack or toss on a salad with spring greens, feta cheese and toasted almonds (the perfect blend of textures and salty/sweet flavors!). Enjoy ALL the benefits of the tiny, mighty berry!!

Homemade fresh cranberry relish and sauces are an all-time holiday favorite. Cranberry relish is a perfect complement to roasted turkey or on leftover turkey sandwiches.

**Ingredients:**
1 12 oz. package of fresh or frozen, thawed cranberries*
1 unpeeled orange, cut into 8 pieces (seeded)
¾ cup granulated sugar

*Wash uncooked cranberries thoroughly before using.

**Directions:**
Place cranberries and orange pieces in a food processor. Process until mixture is evenly chopped. Transfer to bowl or storage container and stir in sugar. Refrigerate until ready to use.

Kim’s side note: I sometimes serve a variation of this gently heated, then mixed with ½ c toasted chopped pecans or almonds, and spooned over roasted pork loin, chops, or grilled chicken breast. Easy! Paired with grilled vegetables and a green leafy salad you have a super meal.

This recipe is courtesy of the Cranberry Marketing Committee. For more great recipes, visit www.USCranberries.com.

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**Holiday Weight continued from page 1**

- Going to parties? Consider sipping on hot tea, cider, or coffee before you attend. Hot liquids may help satiate your appetite. Cocktails, cheese, nuts and fudge are the “yellow light” foods (slow down!). I use my thumb as a cue—if my food serving of the heavier fare is bigger than that I’m probably going overboard!
- Another good tool. The MyPlate campaign (www.choosemyplate.gov) suggests that you make ½ of your plate fruits and vegetables, ¼ grains, and ¼ protein. Try to choose as many non-starchy vegetables as possible - and no piling please! This strategy can be used for your dinner plate as well as your party plate.

Have a wonderful healthy holiday season!
Becoming A Vegetarian continued from page 3

Perhaps the important reason relates to health. Vegetarians have lower rates of arthritis, cancer, diabetes, gallstones, heart disease, high blood pressure, and strokes, as well as 14% lower cholesterol than meat eaters. On average, vegetarians live about seven years longer than meat eaters. A vegetarian diet is more nutritious due to the vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals, and other substances found in plants. And, if you think you can’t get enough protein on a vegetarian diet, think again. Olympian Carl Lewis is a vegetarian, along with the NFL’s Tony Gonzalez, Ultramarathoner Scott Jurek, Ironman Triathletes Dave Scott and Brendan Brazier, and Mr. International Bodybuilding Champ Andreas Cahling.

Another reason to replace meat, chicken, and fish in your diet can be found in your wallet. Substituting fruits, veggies, and grains for meat can cut your food bill by an average of $4,000 a year. The health effects on your wallet include fewer visits to the healthcare system, which translates to less money spent for co-pays and deductibles.

Factory farms are responsible for an unbelievable amount of waste and air pollution. Animal manure is considered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to be one of the nation’s top 10 pollutants. Livestock also emit more emissions than vehicles.

Are you an animal lover? Twenty-two million animals die every year to support the meat centered diet of the typical American. Conditions on factory farms and in slaughterhouses are often less than humane.

If one or more of the reasons listed above have you thinking about trying a vegetarian diet, do your homework before you begin. The Internet is packed with great resources on getting started, recipes, and tips for success. Usually people who start slow - say one vegetarian meal a week - tend to stick with it and find it easier to transition to two days a week, then three, and up to seven. Use fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts, and seeds as the building blocks of your diet. You can also start by using meat alternatives in chili, spaghetti sauce, and tacos to allow you to have your favorite dishes and still go meat-free. There is a great turkey substitute for holiday dinners. Most restaurants, even steakhouses, have vegetarian options on their menus and we’re not just talking salads.

Interested in becoming a vegetarian? Call me. Let’s talk about it over lunch!