



November 29, 2009 – Grand Rapids, MI

Buck the Trend

Today is the end of the Thanksgiving holiday weekend. I'm sure you've eaten your share of the wonderful foods we get only this time of year. So have I. It's what we do next that determines whether we'll gain the holiday seven--which is now thought to be closer to 12 pounds--or not. How about taking it a step further? Instead of gaining the typical seven pounds, how about losing five to ten pounds between now and New Years? I'll give you three strategies to try, but first, here's a good reason why you should.

Diabetes Projected to Increase

In a study published this past week in *Diabetes Care*, researchers used computer models to project the increase in cases of diabetes and the cost of treatment for the next 25 years (1). They project that the number of diagnosed cases will rise from 23.7 to 44.1 million in adults. The cost of care will rise to over \$330 million. They also state that the number is probably low because they used data only from people over 18 years of age. With the rise in juvenile obesity, the numbers will probably be much higher.

I agree that those projections are probably low. Only half the people with diabetes are diagnosed at the current time; the rest are walking around wondering why they don't have energy, why they can't lose weight, and clueless to the damage that's being done in their bodies. If we could all limit the weight gain over the holidays from Thanksgiving to New Years, that could reduce the rate of diabetes by thousands. If we could actually lose weight during that time, we might start to reverse the trend.

Three Strategies

There are three ways you can buck this trend to hold your own and possibly lose weight over this holiday. That means that if you're on a program to eat less, you continue to do so. If you haven't been monitoring what you eat, well, this is a good a time as any because that way you can start the New Year at a healthier weight.

Stay the Course at Every Meal

This past holiday, several people I know who are committed to losing weight stuck with their program--they sampled some of the holiday foods but kept track of everything they ate. That's a great way to do things if you're absolutely committed to your goal as they are. That goes along with what I've always said: you can eat anything you want as long as you control the amount.

Eat What You Want, but Eat Reasonable Portions

This is similar to the first strategy but for those of you who are not on a specific program. I'm a mashed-potato-and-gravy guy. I know exactly how good the gravy is because I make it. There have been times in my life when I filled an entire dinner plate with mashed potatoes and smothered them with gravy. I don't do that any more. I have a reasonable portion and when this weekend is over, so are those foods--I won't make mashed potatoes and gravy again until Christmas. But the holiday meals are only one part of the problem. High-calorie snacks reign supreme; there will be pitch-ins at church, holiday snacks at work, and parties with the neighbors, not to mention all the holiday baking at home. Eat a reasonable portion of your favorite foods and then no more. And when presented with a new treat, take a tiny portion to determine whether it's worth the calories rather than taking a normal-size helping and finish it because you feel you must or simply eat it without thinking. Make sure you also watch what you drink--there are plenty of calories in drinks with alcohol.

Eat What You Want and Then Eat Less the Rest of the Time

This is the riskiest but probably the most realistic approach. If you stuff yourself at Thanksgiving, if you eat a dozen chicken wings with blue cheese sauce at a party, fine--it's one meal at one moment in time and it's over. Eat less than you usually do for the next few days and try to move more--take the stairs, go for a walk, or catch up on yardwork.

The Bottom Line

Every strategy will work as long as you think about it; mindless eating will be your downfall. You'll eat more on other days of the month between now and the New Year, and then you've gained seven or 12 pounds. I say it's time to buck the trend. Let's all lose seven pound between now and New Years. That's just over a pound a week, and it's safe and reasonable. We'll do it the old-fashioned way: eat less and move more. What a concept!

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

Reference: *Diabetes Care* 32:2225–2229, 2009.

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