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Strategies can help avoid holiday pounds

Many nutritionists say
 moderation is the key to
 keeping extra pounds off

By Sarah Skidmore
 Oregon Daily Emerald

Gravy for turkey, frosting on cookies and egg in eggnog can make many students get the Santa Claus physique they never wanted.

The average person gains eight to 10 pounds during the period between Thanksgiving and New Years, Student Health Center nutritionist Kristen Olmos said.

"It is pretty hard to control myself, and my dad is a pastry chef, so that doesn't help much," said Matthew Holton, junior majoring in political science and philosophy.

Both the joy and stress of the holidays can bring on these extra pounds. But by making educated decisions, the weight gain can be avoided.

"I think it is possible to maintain a healthy lifestyle and healthy weight through the holidays. But people need to go into the whole season being aware," Olmos said.

Holiday gatherings frequently include foods that are high in fat and people tend to consume them in excess, she said. She also noted that students should be particularly wary of the empty calories of alcohol.

"I tend to drink more because I don't have to worry about going class," sophomore Andy Beyer said.

Preventing the holiday weight gain does not mean missing all the holiday treats and drinks. Deprivation is not a good tool for weight loss, Olmos said.

"Go ahead and have the gravy, have the candied yams, but have them in moderation," Olmos said.

Weight Watchers offers several tips on avoiding the weight gain. Never go to a party hungry, again avoiding the munchies. Nibble on high-fiber foods. Vegetables can keep you feeling full longer and are better for you than nuts or chips. Try anything you want in moderation; you won't feel deprived or guilty, according to Weight Watchers. Eat at a moderate pace, it takes time for your body to let you know it is full. Drink water between courses to help fill up and keep healthy.

"People in general tend to overdo it during the holidays," Olmos said.

Incorporating physical activities into your social scene can also be beneficial, Olmos said. After a family meal, suggest a walk together.

If you do over-indulge, do not beat yourself up over it, Olmos said. Take the holidays as a time to be happy.

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For more information, call the
University Health Center at 346-4441