

FESTIVE HEALTH

Sticking to a balanced diet over the festive season is challenging. Here's some help.



We tend to eat more than usual during the holidays. Gaining a little bit of weight is normal, but excessive weight gain can lead to health problems such as diabetes and heart disease.

The good news is it's possible to control your weight during the festivities.



Registered dietician **Xoli Dube**, spokesperson for the Association of Dietetics in South Africa (ADSA), gives these tips.



Protein punch

Foods high in protein keep you full for longer.

Have scrambled or poached eggs for breakfast and add skinless chicken breasts or tinned tuna to your lunchtime salad. When you feel peckish, skip the chips and pastries and rather go for a high-protein, low-kilojoule snack, such as raw flaked almonds in a cup of low-fat yoghurt or raw vegetables dipped in fat-free cottage cheese.



Check the chews

Chewing your food properly helps your body absorb nutrients better. You'll also eat less

as your brain has time to register that you've had enough.



Clever desserts

Choose healthier dessert options, such as strawberry dipped in dark chocolate, baked apples and poached pears. And share it with someone - you'll eat only half the number of kilojoules.



Water-wise

'Drink water instead of cold drinks, fruit juice, energy drinks, alcohol and sweetened tea or coffee,' advises Xoli. Drinks add kilojoules just like solid food. And keep your alcohol intake in check by alternating every unit of alcohol with a glass of water.



Train your eye

Pour beverages other than water into a slender glass. Short, wide glasses trick your eye and make it hard to judge how much you are drinking. Another trick is to use side plates instead of big dinner plates - smaller portions seem bigger on a smaller plate.



Get more sleep

Studies have shown if you regularly sleep

less than six hours per night it can increase weight gain. Sleep deprivation changes the hormones involved in things like appetite regulation. This means if you haven't slept enough, you'll feel hungrier and are likely to eat more.

- For individualised nutrition advice, visit the Association for Dietetics in South Africa at www.adsa.org.za to find a registered dietician in your area.
- Check out the recipes and dietary guidelines on the Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa's site heartfoundation.co.za.

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

The energy you get from food is measured in kilojoules (kJ). For example, there are about 290 kJ in a slice of wholewheat bread.

