

## Get cracking on planning for Christmas!

The festive season is full of temptation and nutritionists estimate that we can munch and slurp our way through a staggering 6,000 calories on the big day alone. A calculation for the holiday fortnight, on that basis, is not for the faint hearted and it is therefore no surprise that there is a huge migration from armchair to diet club and gym come January.

Why do we put ourselves through this cycle of metabolic torture each year? With a little informed planning we can still fit into our jeans in the new year and be in a better position to enjoy the benefits of exercise, whether that be in the gym or outside in the crisp winter air.

Most of our traditional Christmas foods come with surprising health benefits, without compromising on taste. It is very often the “extras” which leave a reminder on the hips. So indulge with moderation over the festive season and plan for a healthful start to another new year.

- Turkey – high in protein, B vitamins, iron and tryptophan which helps make the feel-good brain chemical serotonin. Avoid the skin and cut your saturated fat intake
- Herby stuffing – herbs can transform both taste and health benefits. Garlic and onions help thin blood and lower cholesterol, sage helps digestion, thyme for coughs and colds, rosemary combats water retention and wrinkles. All have anti-cancer plant compounds
- Brussels sprouts – love them or hate them, they contain anti-cancer phytochemicals and aid liver detox. Also rich in folic acid which is essential for brain health
- Sweet potatoes – swap your usual roast tatties for these instead. High in beta-carotene, vitamins A and C for good skin and optimum immune function
- Cranberries – packed full of antioxidants
- Chocolate – dark chocolate with 70 per cent cocoa scores high in the antioxidant ratings. Swap high fat, high sugar, milk chocolates for a few squares of dark and boost your body’s anti-ageing arsenal
- Nuts – get cracking! Freshly shelled walnuts are rich in Omega 3 oil, almonds are high in protein, iron, calcium, vitamin E, zinc and B2, brazils are rich in selenium for healthy thyroid hormone metabolism

And don’t just eat simply because you are surrounded by food and drink. Eat slowly and savour the flavours before going outside for a brisk walk to help it all go down. Give yourself the best possible gift of good health this Christmas.

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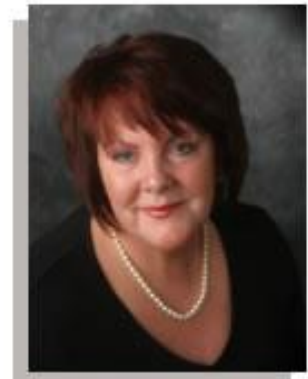
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