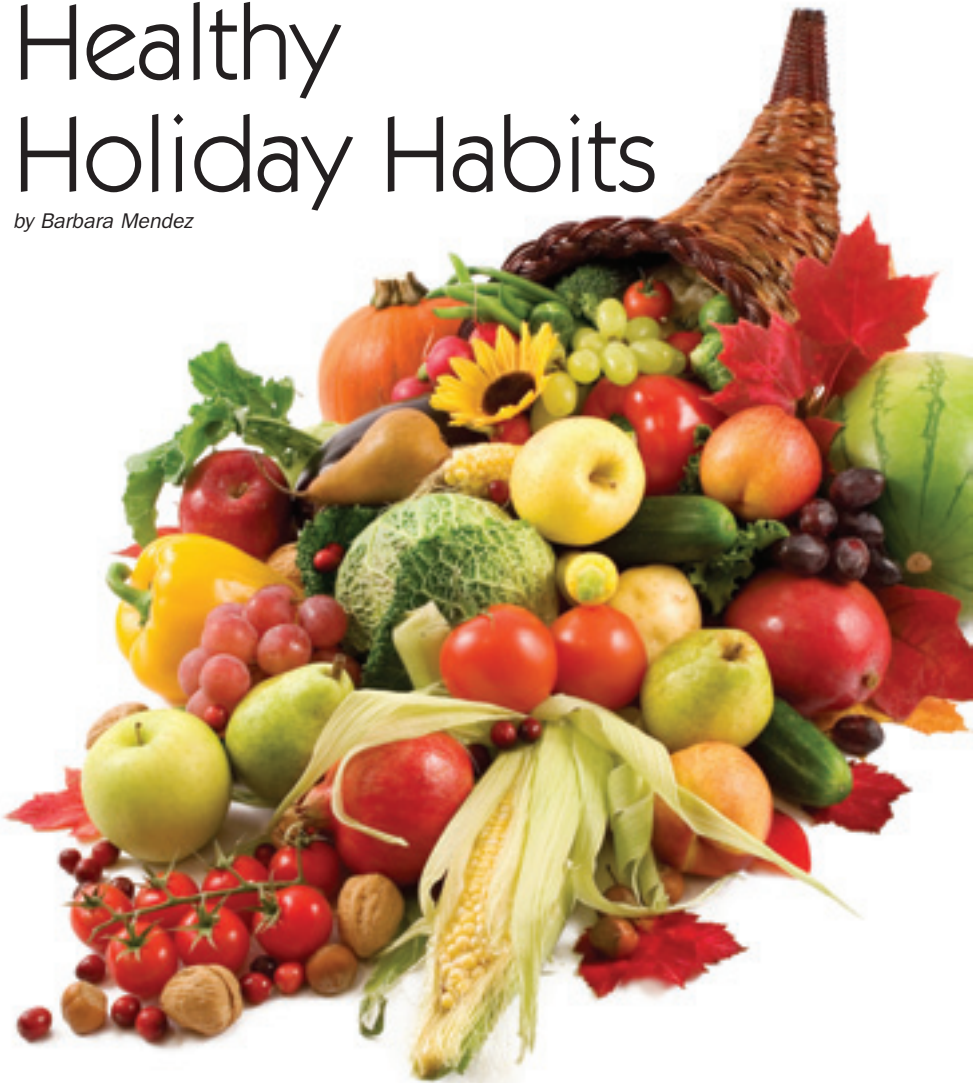


Healthy Holiday Habits

by Barbara Mendez



This time of year is challenging for all of us. Between the family gatherings, office parties and dinner invitations, it is reasonable to expect to be challenged in regards to your weight and health regime like no other time of the year. On average, people gain five pounds during the holidays. Not so bad, right? Unfortunately, most of us only lose three of those five pounds after the season is over, holding onto two pounds that get added to the two pounds you didn't lose the year before. At the end

of 10 years, that's a total of 20 pounds!

The best way to prevent weight gain is to make the very best choices you can each time you attend an event. The following guidelines will give you some suggestions to help you hold it together this holiday season and minimize the damage.

Try to keep it under control as best you can, because you know you will have to pay for it later.

Load up on vegetables: When dining out or partaking of a holiday feast, do your best to load up on vegetables and salad. Literally fill your plate with salad and every available vegetable on the table. Make room for modest amounts of protein (approximately 4 ounces or so: basically the size of a deck of cards) so that there is far less room for dessert. If fruit is available for dessert try satisfying your sugar cravings with that and if there is no way that is going to happen given the fact that a large chocolate ganache cake is sitting right in the middle of the table and calling your name to your favorite song, then have a sliver of cake and fruit and see how that goes. Do your best.

Drink a glass of water for every alcoholic beverage you consume: Don't just keep drinking alcohol because you know where that will get you; on the "most embarrassed" list at the office. Instead make sure you drink at least one glass of water per alcoholic beverage. It will cut down on the amount of drinking you do overall and help prevent the hang over feeling the next day.

Eat before you go: If you are sure there will be nothing of nutritional value at the event you are about to attend, try to eat something before you go. If you are not a person that drinks alcohol, then anything will do; perhaps a banana or a small salad. If you know you will be drinking, have some protein, preferably chicken or even a little bit of beef to help absorb the alcohol.

Eat only in the middle: The most damaging part of any meal in regards to keeping your weight down is the bookends: the bread basket and dessert. Decide to forego both this holiday season. By doing so you will save on average up to 500 calories for

that meal alone!! That may be enough to help you stay in your current dress size this holiday season.

Most importantly, stay in a spirit of joy and gratitude.

By feeling happy and grateful, it may cut down on the emotional eating often accompanied by frequent family gatherings. Have a great Holiday Season and remember how blessed you really are.

Barbara Mendez is a registered pharmacist and nutritional consultant in private practice in New York City. She is also the in-house nutritionist for the Harvard Club. For more information on Barbara, please go to her website at www.lifestylenutrients.net Barbara is available for corporate lectures.

