Curbing Holiday Weight Gain

It’s that festive and joyful time of year again… the holiday season! The holidays are a time to celebrate and spend time with family and friends alike. However, the holiday season and winter months often bring more high calorie “party” and “comfort” foods to the table and less physical activity which can result in weight gain. “Weight gain associated with the holidays can contribute to overall increases in body weight as we age” says Texas Agrilife Extension Service agent [insert name here].

To help curb holiday weight gain, [insert name here] first suggests that you concentrate on family, friends, and reasons for celebrating the holiday rather than what kind and how good the foods served will be. In other words, shift the focus of your holiday celebration away from food and more on the people you are celebrating with. Use these tips to make your holiday celebrations a little easier on your waistline:

- **Plan before you feast.** If you are going to a holiday party, don’t go on an empty stomach. Skipping meals may cause you to overindulge on high calorie, high fat foods. Instead, eat small amounts of healthful foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables, cereal, yogurt, or a small wrap or sandwich before the event. Once you arrive at the party, take a look at the foods being served and decide what you will eat ahead of time. Also, consider if there will be a main meal later in the day. This will help you maintain control of your eating while still enjoying your favorite foods.

- **Avoid extra calories from drinks.** Alcoholic drinks and other holiday favorites such as eggnog may taste great but provide lots of extra calories and few nutrients. In fact, one 6 oz. glass of wine has 150 calories, while an 8 oz. glass of eggnog provides 350 calories! In addition, regular sodas contain on average, 140 calories per can. Consider skipping these high calorie beverages, or limiting yourself to just one small glass so that you can save most of your calories for the main meal or appetizers.

- **Control yourself at the table.** When sitting down at the table for the main meal, remember to keep you portion sizes in check. Choose small portions of the foods you want to eat then take your time and enjoy your meal. Remember to take small bites, chew slowly and savor your food. Once you have finished eating, get up from the table. If you remain at the table,
it will be easy to continue eating. Instead, offer to clean the table or put away leftovers. Once the work is done, suggest a walk outside or a fun game to take the focus off of food. Another good tip is to avoid being near the buffet table at parties which can lead to over eating as well.

- **Be a healthy helper.** One way to ensure that a healthy option will be available at the party is to offer to prepare and bring a dish. Your host will appreciate your help and you will have one dish that is a healthy alternative. If you are in the kitchen preparing foods, also be conscious of all of those tiny tastes you sneak when no one is looking. For example, that taste of sugar cookie dough packs 40 calories and that lick of frosting adds another 25 calories! The calories from these tiny tastes can add up quickly.

- **Stick to your routine.** The holiday season can be challenging for anyone trying maintain their weight but especially so for a person trying to lose weight. Do your best to stick to your routine during the holiday season. Continue to be physically active as much as possible, ideally for 30 minutes five days per week. Maintain your healthy eating habits at home by focusing on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein sources, and low-fat or fat-free milk products.

  Use these tips to curb holiday weight gain while still enjoying your favorite foods in moderation. Remember to focus on friends and family and stick to your routine!

  For more about food and nutrition topics, contact your local Texas Agrilife Extension Service office at [insert information here].