

## Avoiding excess party food and alcohol

By Kelly Walker

The festive season is upon us and social invites are likely to be landing on the doorstep at an alarming rate. Attending all the work functions and family get togethers can play havoc on digestive functioning and waistlines.

Resist the temptation of rich foods and abundant alcohol and use the following guidelines to keep yourself in tiptop shape.

Never arrive at a function hungry. Have a small healthy snack before you go to reduce the chance of overeating when you get there. When you do arrive make your first drink a refreshing glass of mineral water. Alternate alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks throughout the party and choose a small wine glass. Avoid top-ups of wine, as it is hard to keep track of exactly how much you are drinking, wait until your glass is empty before re-filling.

Doing the rounds and talking to everyone will keep you busy and reduce the amount of time you have for snacking. Make sure you do not stand too close to the buffet table, the further you are away from it the less temptation there is to pick at food.

When it is time to come face to face with all the party food be sensible about it. Ask yourself how hungry you really are. Remember just because it may be free doesn't mean you have to eat as much as possible. Try not to pile your plate high with treats you may not need. Take one or two items and come back for more if you genuinely need to.

Avoid choosing calorie-rich foods, this may mean adopting a pastry-free policy. Pastry is high in saturated fat and is usually abundant on the party food menu. Say no to vol-au-vents, sausage rolls and mince pies. Limit the amount of salted peanuts

you eat to a handful and cut back on fat by removing the skin from chicken drumsticks.

Aim to choose the healthier alternatives that may be on offer, such as egg or tuna sandwiches, olive and sundried tomato bruschetta, unsalted almonds, walnuts, dried chick peas and brazil nuts, dried fruit and fresh fruit salad. Pretzels, rice crackers, ryvita, oatcakes or vegetable crudites are great dipped in hummus or ricotta cheese, mixed with sweet chilli sauce. Snack sized or chopped up nut and seed bars can be good alternatives to chocolates and mince pies. If your sweet tooth really does kick in and you can't say no choose dark chocolate instead of milk and only have a small amount.

If you are the host, plan your party menus and only buy and prepare as much food as you need. Inform family the week before they arrive that there is no need to bring food. You have this covered and let people know you don't want food as gifts, especially chocolates. Once the occasion is over place leftovers in the freezer immediately, to make them harder to get hold of. Even better; give leftovers to guests when they leave.

Remember to keep active during the festive period. If music is provided at the party get up on the dance floor and show your talents! If it is a family occasion, or you are with close friends, play a game of twister and get your blood circulating. Keeping busy during a party will keep you away from the temptation of the buffet table. Walking home from a party instead of taking a taxi can not only save a bit of money but also provide some exercise.

Minor alterations can make a staggering difference to the way you feel over Christmas and New Year. This can make the whole party season much more enjoyable!