



NEWS RELEASE

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5 reasons to keep a food diary during the holidays

*By Karen Hawkins,
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FORT LEE, Va. – It’s possible to lose weight — or at least keep from gaining — during the holidays, if you keep a food diary. You might even find that you lose a few pounds, according to research.

The Kaiser Permanente’s Center for Health Research found that one of the most important things you can do is write down what you eat. When they followed more than 2,000 dieters, researchers found that the keeping a food diary was the greatest predictor of successful weight loss. It was even greater than exercise habits, age and body mass index. The number of pounds people lost was directly related to the number of days they wrote in their log.

To take it a step further, participants were asked to follow the DASH diet — Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension — which is high in fruits and vegetables and low in fat; attend weekly education sessions; and be physically active for at least 30 minutes a day. So if you really want to avoid the weight “creep” of five pounds or more this holiday season, consider keeping a food diary.

Keeping a food diary helps you see how much and what you eat throughout the day and night. It also lets you see what you eat over a period of time. Eating those holiday cookies or a few pieces of candy here and there add up when you see them on paper. Writing down what you eat and drink, along with how you are feeling at the time, helps you identify your eating habits. Do you eat during stressful times or when you’re bored? Figuring out if and when you overeat is helpful with maintaining and losing weight.

Keeping track of what you eat and drink also allows you to enjoy a treat once in a while. If you know you've got calories to spare for the day, and no chocolate has passed your lips for several days, you can indulge a little at the holiday party.

Knowing you have to write down everything you eat makes you think twice about eating that second plate of fried chicken at a buffet. Even if you're the only person who'll see your diary, writing down what and how much you eat helps with your self-control.

Carry your food diary in your pocket or your purse. Whether you use one of the latest phone apps for your cell phone or just write it down on paper, keep your diary with you at all times. That way you're writing down what you eat immediately after the meal, rather than trying to remember at the end of the day.

Keeping a record of your daily food intake will help you stay on track when trying to lose weight or maintain a healthy weight and activity level. So during the holidays, give yourself the gift of not gaining a few pounds by keeping a food diary. And, you might even lose a few pounds.

-DeCA-

About DeCA: *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings worth more than \$4,400 annually for a family of four. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America's military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.*