



NEWS RELEASE

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Don't let the holidays add a dollop to your waistline

*By Chris Halagarda,
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FORT LEE, Va. – Avoiding the dreaded “holiday weight gain” is a huge challenge for many people over the next few months. Usually, the weight begins to ascend about the same time the children return from trick-or-treating with an oversized bag of Halloween candy and the “belly swell” continues right until the first few days of the new year. Of course, the actual days of celebration seat us at the table with family and an array of sugar- and fat-laden foods.

But it's not just those special days that pose the biggest problem to our waistline. In fact, most dietitians agree that people could overindulge slightly on the holidays and not gain weight over the last few months of the year, as long as they restrict their overindulgence to those select days. Unfortunately, it's more than the actual holidays that pose a threat to your beltline. The real problem lies in mindless overeating.

For example, picking at the donated candy left in the workplace break room, tasting each type of pie at the office party or drinking more soft drinks and alcohol in the last three months than the first nine months of the year combined can pack on pounds. As a result, you're sitting there Jan. 2 thinking about which health club to join and deciding which fad diet to follow. This year, make a pledge to yourself to not gain weight from now until New Year's Day, and write down three approaches you're going to take to succeed at maintaining your weight. Below are just a few potential ways to prevent this year's holiday weight gain.

Get your children on board: When your little witches and goblins return from trick-or-treating, ask them to choose their favorite five or 10 pieces of candy to keep and donate the rest

to your workplace break room or bring them to a large social event to share with many people. Keeping large amounts of candy at home can lead to overeating, even if you don't like it. Limit liquid calories: Soft drinks pack a lot of calories with very little effect on our appetite, since sugar lacks the ability to communicate to the brain that you've consumed any calories. Alcohol acts a little differently in the body than soda but still adds fat to your midriff very efficiently. Choose water, flavored seltzer and green tea as your main fluids. If you're a coffee drinker, enjoy your usual cups of regular or decaf coffee and avoid or limit sugar and cream if you can.

Eat a complete meal before dessert: When you eat a complete meal that includes protein, fat and carbohydrates, you're more likely to be full, which could lead to being less tempted to eat sweets. Foods that are high in water and fiber, such as broth-based soups, fruits and vegetables, are especially effective at maximizing fullness while limiting calories.

Be a good role model: Be your children's, co-workers or sibling's role model for healthy eating. Bring healthy meals or snacks to office parties, bring healthy meals for lunch each day and encourage your children to assist you with meal preparation. When children are involved in the cooking process, they're more likely to feel a sense of pride and eat foods that they never would have tried if you cooked it and served it to them yourself. Ask them to help you organize shopping lists, shop the commissary for ingredients and chop, flip or mix the foods and you'll find that they'll be much more appreciative of the foods they prepare.

Don't forget to exercise: If you exercise regularly, don't stop! Too many people get "too busy" around the holidays and stop taking care of themselves. Make your daily or weekly to-do list and include daily exercise on that list – even if you only block off 15 minutes of walking a few times a day. Just be sure to do it.

Stand instead of sit: Research shows that people who sit each day have a higher mortality rate than those who stand or move all day, even if they exercise. If you are a "desk jockey," be sure to get up and move or stand every few minutes. Some possibilities are to read, talk on the phone or write notes while standing. Just try to limit how often and how long you sit during the day.

For more information about making healthy choices, visit Ask the Dietitian on <http://www.commissaries.com> and post your questions on the DeCA Dietitian Forum. Be sure to look for other useful information in the Dietitian's Voice archive. Sign up with the DeCA Dietitian on www.twitter.com and get messages sent to your cell phone today. For delicious

recipes, check out Kay's Kitchen. And to enjoy all your commissary has to offer, sign up for the *Commissary Connection*.

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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.*