

Give yourself a guilt-free Christmas

BY LENA SIN, SPECIAL TO THE PROVINCE DECEMBER 21, 2012



After devouring your Christmas meal, go for a brisk half-hour walk to burn some calories.

Photograph by: Robert Byron, Getty Images/Hemera

Christmas isn't quite here but many of us are already feeling guilty about over-indulging.

In a recent online survey of 900 adults in Metro Vancouver, 63 per cent said they were feeling guilty about how much they will eat during the holidays and 34 per cent said they aren't able to fully enjoy

holiday food because they're conscious of their weight, according to the poll by Ipsos Reid, commissioned by Fitness Town.

But will that guilt do anything to change our behaviour? Apparently not.

Nearly 71 per cent of those polled said they predicted over-indulging during the holidays.

Most plan to assuage that guilt post-Christmas, with 88 per cent saying they plan to get fit after the holidays.

But Dai Manuel, chief operating officer of Fitness Town, says people can begin taking simple steps today to ensure a delicious and guilt-free holiday. The key, he says, is that adage: "Everything in moderation."

Even a short walk will make you feel better.

"It all comes down to debits and credits," says Manuel.

"Why not, after your Christmas feast, go for a brisk 20- to 30-minute walk with the whole family? Do something physical to keep the body moving."

He also recommends drinking a glass of water before you start your Christmas feast to make sure you're hydrated. Dehydration can feel like hunger and induce overeating.

Also, before you go for second helpings, consider having a salad first so you're getting enough fibre and not filling yourself up with fat-laden foods.

To enjoy a guilt-free holiday, here's a summary of tips from Manuel:

Less than seven per cent of Vancouverites kept a fitness-focused New Year's resolution last year, according to the Ipsos Reid poll. When resolutions aren't kept, it can make you feel frustrated early in the New Year. Focus on changing your lifestyle gradually instead.

Why put it off? Don't put yourself through a mad panic and rush to the gym on Jan 1. If you do some short, simple workouts before and during the festive season, you'll feel better and balanced afterwards.

What do you enjoy doing most? Is it walking the dog, using weights or a functional trainer at home?

Set realistic goals, stick to them and slowly raise the intensity of your activity sessions. Instead of setting your goal to lose weight, which can be tough at this time of year, why not just try and maintain it? That's more realistic and encouraging when achieved.

Make smart choices about what you're eating, drinking and how you're exercising. Make sure you own those decisions and be preventive, not reactive.

Whether you choose to train with someone or start a fitness plan that you post on your fridge so you're reminded of it every day, make sure you're accountable for what you're doing. You're more likely to stick to the schedule that way.

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