





What makes Christmas such a tricky time of year, at least as far as your body is concerned?



EXPECTATIONS

Before we get to the calorie laden food, free flowing alcohol and constant parties, there are the festive expectations.

Religious, or not, Christmas is a special time of the year – where everyone is expected to get into the festive spirit.

This often means conforming – always saying yes, even when you want to say no – being part of the party. With everyone bringing in Christmas goodies, our inability to say NO can often be our undoing. Around Christmas, peer-pressure almost becomes acceptable with people who say no to dipping into the chocolate tin being considered the Christmas grinch. You have to remember, that it is often those leading the peer pressure who are feeling the least secure about the Christmas calories. Don't be rude, but don't give in. Your health is more important.

FOREVER FEASTING

Christmas is not Christmas, without platters of cookies, tins of sweets, countless slices of Christmas cake and the three-course meal with all the trimmings. This wouldn't be so bad if it was only a one day event and you had 364 other days to work it off. Sadly, Christmas has become a month long event with multiple festivities, from the office party to a friend's pre-Christmas Christmas party and everything else in between.

Even if you are able to say no to the cake and opt for smaller servings, the additional Christmas calories will still mount up.

THE KEY TO KEEPING THE CHRISTMAS CALORIES DOWN IS:

Firstly, be aware of what you are eating. So many of us have NO IDEA about the amount of calories we consume over Christmas and are often shocked when we do start tallying things up.

Say NO to the Nibbles – honestly, who really likes the chocolate creams and why do we feel it's a mandatory requirement to eat our body weight in pies?

Keep it small – portion control is paramount, why do we feel the need to pile our Christmas dinner to the ceiling. Our stomachs have not suddenly stretched and neither have our energy requirements – so keep it real and stop when you are full.



ENJOY YOUR CHRISTMAS MEAL,

JUST REMEMBER, PORTION

CONTROL IS PARAMOUNT



CHRISTMAS CHEERS

Alcohol and Christmas, it seems for most of us you cannot have one without the other. So much so, that in 2018, 6 billion units of alcohol was consumed over the Christmas period in the US alone!

With a single gram of alcohol containing on average 7 calories and a unit of alcohol measuring 8 grams, thus accounting for 56 calories – without mixers!

At best the 6 billion units consumed over Christmas, weighs in at a staggering 336 billion additional calories!

Liquid calories are often people's downfall, with most not factoring them into their daily allowance. Now, we are not advocating you forgo eating so you can drink to your heart's content and still keep below the RDA recommended daily allowance of calories; but we do stress the need to think about the additional calories consumed when taking on board a Christmas cocktail or three!

CHRISTMAS PARTIES

Forget the drunken fumbles behind the photocopiers, the terrible secret Santa gifts and cringe-worthy Dad dancing – it's the tables overflowing with nibbles, countless Christmas dinners chased down with drinks and of course all the Christmas cakes, puddings and pies that makes the office Christmas parties so dangerous.

In fact, research shows the average Christmas dinner with all the trimmings, pre-dinner snacks and alcohol you're required to run two marathons to burn off the staggering 5,241 calories, the meal contains.

I'm not sure about you, but after most office parties I am in no state to run to the shops let alone do two marathons. So, keeping a check on what's consumed is a far simpler option and one which will leave you feeling better in the morning.

SEASONAL STRESS

T'is the season to be... stressed!

Present buying and wrapping for the masses, office deadlines, family get togethers, prepping and cooking a mountain of food and of course all the parties. Christmas is a time to burn the candle at both ends and push your limits to the max, which ultimately leaves you fragile and stressed.

Sadly, with stress comes weight–gain – helping to explain those additional Christmas pounds. As we turn to the abundance of food on offer for a short–term pick me up.

Over the Christmas period we should look at:

CHRISTMAS CRUSH

While the kids may feel the Christmas countdown takes forever, for the rest of us December seems to fly-by and there is never enough time to do everything we need.

Something has got to give, often it is exercise – let's face it, it's cold, dark and unappealing, even when we do have time to put on the leggings.

The problem is, that Christmas is often the time when we need to be doing the most exercise – for both our physical and mental health – and not the least. So, during the festive period keep in mind that you should place more thought on when and how you exercise.

SEEING THE YEAR OUT WITH A BANG

New Year's Eve, a time to party with pals without a care in the world.

Sadly, we pay for this the next day and the weeks to come, with the liquid calories consumed quickly converted to pounds that are hard to shift.

So how do you cut down on Christmas calories, without taking the joy out of Christmas?





HERE ARE OUR TOP TEN HACKS TO HELP YOU SURVIVE CHRISTMAS AND NOT UNDO ALL THE GOOD WORK YOU'VE DONE OVER THE PAST YEAR.

1. SAID IT ONCE, I WILL SAY IT 1000 TIMES - SLEEP!

Christmas is not a time we often link with sleep, unless that is, we are talking about Santa's visit! However, sleep is probably the single most important step we can take when it comes improving our overall health. Aim to sleep around seven hours a night, placing the emphasis on quality of sleep as well as quantity.

Sleep should be consistent – so set your alarm so that you are waking up at the same time, independent of the day, and going to bed at the same time too. Get into a positive bed time routine, winding down before bed and turning off cellular distractions.

You will wake up feeling better, your body will have had time to repair the festive damage alcohol, overeating and heightened stress levels does and you will be far more prepared to take on the Christmas madness.

2. EXERCISE ADVENT

Rather than treating yourself to a chocolate advent this year, swap it for a jar of physical challenges.

Every morning grab a challenge from the jar and fit it into your routine. This is such a nice way of keeping things fresh this festive season – as you find yourself incorporating wall sits into your teeth cleaning routine and a few tuck jumps while you are waiting to fill up the car.

For a more holistic approach, try my exercise advent below

3. WE LOVE SOUP

Homemade soups are incredibly healthy (unless overflowing with cream) and nutritious. They are also a great way of stopping yourself from reaching for the office cookie tin over the festive season. So, boil up a batch and stick them in the freezer. Then take a pot of soup into work with you, that will leave you far more fulfilled than any pie.

Choose soup when you can, most Christmas dinners offer a range of starters and soup is a brilliant low calorie filler that will help reduce your appetite for mains.

4. CALORIE CONSCIOUS CHRISTMAS

With the average Christmas dinner weighing in at a staggering 5,200 calories, it's time we started looking at what's on our plate and were we can make a healthy swap.

So where should we start?

- 1. Choose turkey over chicken, done well it is just as juicy with a lower calorie load. Then swap the high butter and artificial seasonings, with fresh herbs, garlic and lemon juice to ensure a great taste. Roast in a little water, to keep it moist with some root veggies and a splash of wine (Christmas doesn't have to be 0 fun!).
- 2. Skip the pigs in a blanket they taste good, but not good enough to take on 97 kcal per pig!
- Christmas dinner would not be Christmas dinner without roasted potatoes but at 200 kcal a pop it is worth limiting your number.
- **4. Try steaming your veggies this year**, it is quick, effective and incredibly healthy.
- 5. Then there's the pies, few of us just stick to one and yet at a whopping 370 kcal per piece they soon add up. Pies should be a Christmas treat, not a daily staple especially if you are planning on rounding off your Christmas lunch with some Christmas pudding or cake!



5. WALK IT OFF

Get outside this Christmas, rather than becoming a Christmas pudding on the couch. Go for a long walk to burn off a little of that festive cheer, and you could quickly loose a piece of pie or two.

80 kcal are burnt with every 30-minutes of brisk walk, so go out as a family and explore forgotten places this Christmas. You will make better memories and give your body the post-dinner treat it deserves.

6. NO TO NIBBLES

When it comes to the biggest Christmas calorie culprits it is definitely the nibbles. So limit yourself to a set amount a day and stick with it. It will require will-power, but like any other muscle, you need to practice and exercise willpower for it to be strong!

Starting off is hard, our suggestion is to track the calories that haven't made it to your mouth as well as those that do. This way you can see the real benefit of saying no to that additional slice of Christmas cake, or the third round of office cookies.

Use will power this Christmas, no matter what's on offer, and you will feel mentally and physically better for it.

7. STRESS BUSTING

Christmas is a notoriously stressful time, so make some time in your busy festive schedule to unwind.

Remember, stress often results in over-eating, especially with all the temptation that surrounds you. So, this

Christmas, factor in a few daily, weekly and monthly stress busting strategies into your festive calendar.



It could be as simple as making time for a relaxing bath and great book, going for a massage, spending some time in nature, or practicing a little mindfulness. Whatever suits your personality and needs is perfect. The key is to ensure you set aside some seasonal stress busting time in your busy schedule.

8. TIME MANAGEMENT

Get ahead of the game and get all your Christmas cards posted early this year. Have the present shopping done by mid-November and the food pre-ordered before the first window of the Advent calendar is open.

Managing your time wisely over the Christmas period ensures everything gets done in the least stressful way, while making sure you prioritize the things that are truly important.

9. DRINK WISELY

It might be Christmas, but this doesn't mean the health implications of too much alcohol have simply disappeared.

Be sensible this Christmas with the amount of stress you put your liver and kidneys through, by ensuring you wash down equal measures of water.

If you are drinking, opt for low calorie drinks like white spirits and soda water mixers - relatively low in calories and something you can sip rather than throw down your throat.

10. HAVE FUN

Christmas is all about spending quality time with the people you love.

In the quest to make Christmas healthy, don't forget this. Don't say no to every pie or Christmas dinner invitation, make time to see or speak to family and friends, enjoy the sights, sounds, smell, touch and, most importantly in this context, tastes of Christmas.

Don't go crazy, but also don't ignore the festivities all together – It only happens once a year after all.







Love going out for long bike rides in the summer, but not too sure about the cold and dark winter nights and black ice? Try a spin class, but be careful – they can get addictive, but are a great way of building up a sweat and working off some steam.



Grab it out of your holiday case and get to the gym. A few solid laps in the pool can work wonders, improving cardio-vascular fitness, helping you tone all over and burning a good amount of calories in the process.



Body weight exercises should be part of everyone's daily routine. Our lives are far to sedentary and we should keep moving – so if they are not part of your daily do's, you are doing something wrong.

TRY A FEW OF THESE FOR SIZE, THEN PICK SEVEN EXERCISES AND DO 10 REPS OF EACH, BEFORE REPEATING THIS THREE TIMES:

▲ Inchworm – Stand up tall, with legs straight, making sure your knees aren't locked. Slowly lower your torso towards the floor, then walk hands forward. Once in a push-up position, start taking tiny steps forward so your feet meet your hands, then stand up tall before starting over again!

▲ Tuck jump – Stand with your knees slightly bent, jump up as high as possible, bringing knees in towards your chest. Land with knees slightly bent, then repeat.

Mountain climber – Start on your hands and knees. Bring left foot forwards, directly under chest, while straightening right leg. Keeping hands planted firmly on floor and core tight, jump – switching legs.

Stair climb with biceps curls – Make your stairs a cardio machine, by simply placing a pair of homemade dumbbells at the bottom. Briskly walk up and



down the stairs while doing bicep curls - working the whole body, simply and effectively.

Plank – Love or hate it, we all know how good the plank is for us. Lie face down with forearms under shoulders and hands clasped. Extend legs behind you and rise up on toes. Keep back straight and tighten core, hold position for 30 seconds at first, working up to 60.

Wall sit – Slowly slide your back down a wall until your thighs are parallel to the floor and your knees are directly above your ankles, keeping your back straight. Hold for 30 seconds at first, working towards 60 seconds.

▲ Lunge – Hands on hips, feet hip-width apart, step your right leg forward and slowly lower your body until your left knee is close or touching the floor (at least 90 degrees). Before returning back to starting position and doing with the oppose leg.

▶ Pistol squat – Stand holding your arms straight out in front of your body. Raise your right leg, flexing your right ankle and pushing your hip back. Lower your body while keeping right leg raised high. Hold for 20 seconds, then return for standing.

Squat – Stand with feet parallel, slowly crouch by bending hips and knees until thighs are at least parallel to the floor. Make sure your heels do not rise off the floor. Press through your heals to return to a standing position.

Single-leg deadlift – Start in a standing position with feet together. Lift right leg slightly. Lower arms and torso, whist raising right leg behind you. Keep left knee slightly bent and reach arms as close to the floor as possible. Raise torso whist lowering right leg. Switch legs.

Step-ups – Find a step or bench. Place left foot on the elevated surface, step-up until left leg is straight. Then return to starting position.

Calf raises – From a standing position, slowly rise up on your toes, keeping knees straight and heels off the floor. Hold briefly, then come back down. Try standing on something elevated if you want to raise the bar.



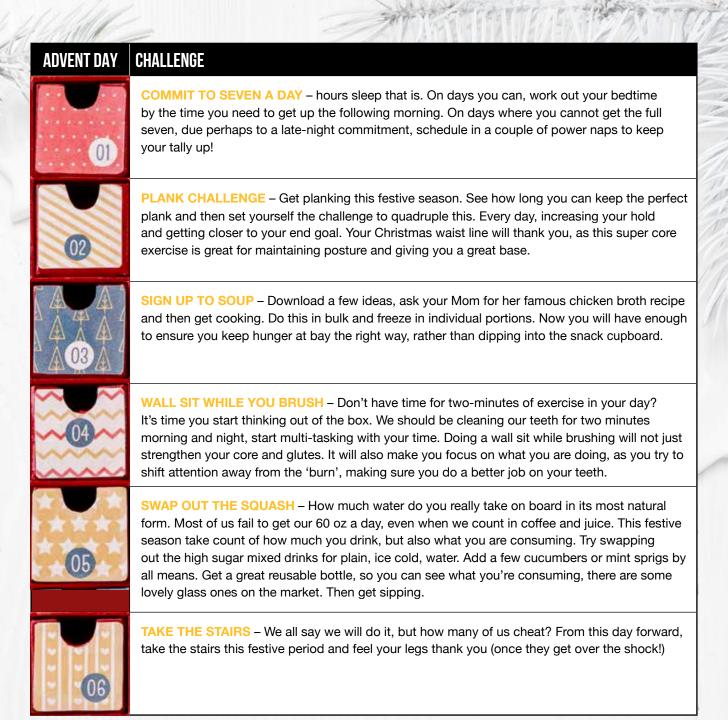
There are a host of great music-based workouts then there is simply switching the radio on and dancing around the kitchen for a good 20 minutes or seven songs. Challenge yourself, try and give your all for seven songs – it is harder than you think and great practicing for the upcoming festivities.



Yoga is a great way of improving core strength, with moves that can be modified to all fitness level and timeframes. Try building a few into your morning routine and feel the benefits almost instantly!









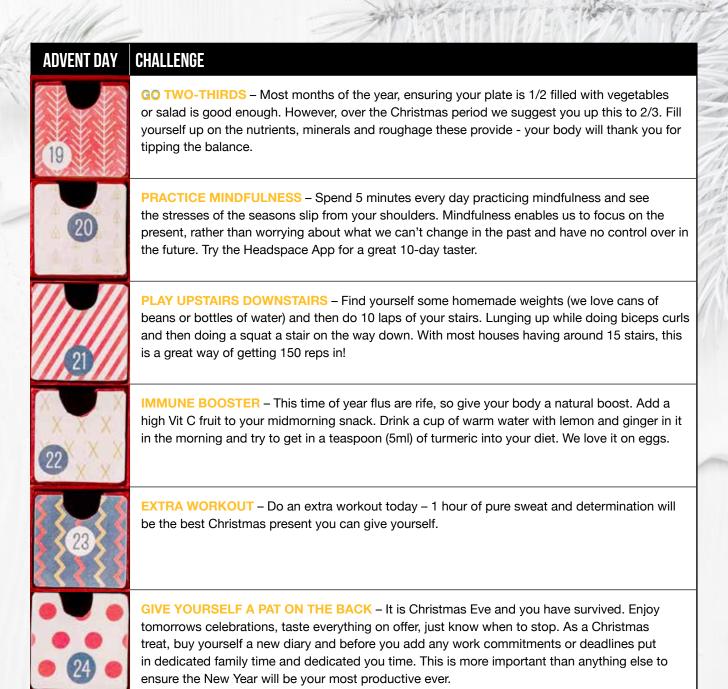
ADVENT DAY CHALLENGE ONE COOKIE RULE - With cookies flying around the office it is easy to over-indulge, dipping in every time one is in your orbit. Take a will-power pledge and exercise some self-control by only saying yes once a day. You will come out of the festive season mentally stronger and a few pounds lighter. SIGN UP TO THREE FESTIVE CLASSES - We all say we will make a concerted effort to exercise more over Christmas, but how many of us do? This year take the plunge by signing up and in advance for three classes. One just before Christmas, one between Christmas and New Year and then one on the 2nd of Jan. This is a brilliant way to shift some Christmas calories and get ahead of the rest who only start exercising in earnest halfway through January! CHRISTMAS GRATITUDE - The festive period often becomes focused on what we give and receive rather than celebrating the essence of Christmas. This year practice some Christmas gratitude, by focusing on the small things that make this time of year so special. The opportunity to engage with friends and family, the cold crisp mornings, the tasteful array of Christmas jumpers that pop up - whatever it is, look for the beauty and celebrate it. Gratitude brings positivity, positivity promotes well-being and good health. FRUIT BOWL FRIDAY - Be a trend setter and bring in a bowl of fruit rather than a box of sweets, your colleagues will secretly thank you for it. RAISE YOUR CALVES - Christmas is the season for sitting, resulting in swollen legs and ankles. Factor in a few calf raise sessions every day, while you are doing the mundane jobs like washing up. FESTIVE FEET - During the festivities our feet are often forgot, hidden in boots, socks and slippers. Yet come the Christmas party they are often put on show... so spend a little time and treat them to a pre-party pamper. 20 minutes doing a simple Epsom Salt scrub will help shed dead skin and make trimming toenails and cutting cuticles easier. Our feet work so hard it is time to give something back.



ADVENT DAY CHALLENGE PORRIDGE THE BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS - Cold, dark mornings make us instinctively reach for a slice of buttery toast over half a grapefruit. STOP. Instant oats are cheap, filling and delightful with a bit of cinnamon on top. One cup of oats, to two cups of water makes enough oats for four bowls. Add a bit of honey in the mix, some blueberries and a sprinkling of cinnamon and you will have a family favorite whipped up in minutes. #Winner! STRETCH THEN SLEEP - Stretching helps promote a good night sleep, so get through the bathroom 15 minutes earlier and before you jump into bed make sure you have a good stretch. Two stretches we like to incorporate are great body weight exercises too: the inchworm and oneleg dead lift. Add a few Yoga poses to the list and make a 7-move routine that helps you unwind physically and mentally before bed. WALK IT OFF - It is inevitable that you will overeat during the festive period, to counterbalance this plan a couple of weekend walks with family and friends. A nice long walk, in the brisk winter weather not only blows out the cobwebs (which can be handy after some festive fun). It can also help melt away the pie calories. SEVEN DAYS OF SOBRIETY - One of the biggest challenges of the festive period is not to overdo it. Christmas parties, informal gatherings, after work drinks, means most of us consume the same number of units in a week as we normally do in any other month. To help reduce your overall alcohol and associated calorie consumption schedule in seven days of sobriety. SOUP FOR THE SOUL - There are many people who find the festive period a challenge, for a number of reasons. Do something to feed your soul this festive season by volunteering to help those in need. You could donate some of your soup to a shelter, help with an organized charitable event, or simply support a colleague during this challenging time of the year.

PROMOTE SELF-GROWTH – It is one of the key habits that defines those with entrepreneurial attitudes. If you are not willing to invest in yourself, no one else will. Look at the area within your life where growth is most needed and invest in it. It might be physical growth, so get yourself a fitness coach. You might be looking for mental or spiritual growth - check out inspiring Ted Talks. It might be a life-coach that you require to set you on the right path. Whatever the direction of growth you choose, if truly invest in it, you will see results.









THIS NEW YEAR'S EVE APPROACH THINGS A LITTLE DIFFERENTLY

1. DON'T SKIP MEALS AHEAD OF NEW YEAR'S EVE (NYE)

For a start, eating well throughout the day helps you to handle the additional alcohol.

More importantly, it stops you reaching for the snacks. New Year's Eve is a time for calorie laden canapes – keep these to a minimum, by ensuring you don't arrive starving and aren't tempted to hang out at the entree table all night. Make a rule – NO return trips!

2. WATER CHASERS AND SODA WATER STARTERS

This is the next level of alternating drinks. Not only should you follow every alcoholic beverage with a hangover busting glass of water. You should pre-empt your alcoholic drink with a glass of soda water, which could be mistaken for the harder stuff and will slow your drinking speed.

3. SNEAK IN A PRE-NYE WORKOUT THE DAY BEFORE

This way, you will have brought yourself a bit of leeway to enjoy the festive food.



4. SKIP THE DIPS AND GRAZE LIKE A GOAT

Even someone three drinks down can remember this rule.

Simply put, only graze on 'snacks' as a herbivore would – saying no to the sausage roll, while embracing the carrot sticks. BUT, don't be tempted to dip – otherwise all your hard work would be meaningless.

5. KNOW THE CALORIES IN YOUR FAVORITE DRINK

For instance, did you know a pint of lager is likely to have less calories (approx. 187) than a 200ml Gin and Tonic (approx. 195).

Make sure you check the handy drinks calorie chart below, taken from treated.com

6. BE KIND TO YOURSELF

If you have been good the rest of the year then you deserve the chance to blow off steam – just set your own limits and stick to them.

DRINK	SIZE	CALORIES
Baileys Irish Cream	37.5ml	123
Pint of bitter	568ml	190
Bottle of pale ale	330ml	120
Pint of lager	568ml	187
Champagne	125ml	81
Gin and Tonic	200ml	195
Guinness	568ml	202
Jagermeister	25ml	103
Pint of cider	568ml	215
Glass of red wine	250ml	201
Alcho-pop	330ml	228
Glass of white wine	250ml	193
Vodka Red Bull	175ml	165
Whiskey and coke	175ml	177

