

# Overspending to overeating: How to curb holiday indulging

CHRIS SIMON & ADAM MARTIN-ROBBINS

csimon@yrmg.com/amartinrobbins@yrmg.com

The holidays can be a time to let loose - on your wallet, trash bin and waistline.

Once the calendar turns to December, there's a tendency to relax, exhale and be less stringent on the rules that guide us through most of the year.

We've all done it. After working so hard for 11 months, the extra slice of pie or second helping of mashed potatoes is well-deserved, right?

Then there's the gift shopping budget.

We want to give our kids and spouses the happiest holiday season possible. Their dreams must become reality. However, those wishes come with a cost and often strain a family's budget, said Seneca College professor and certified financial planner Sam Albanese.

"We know we have to spend and at this time of the year we tend to spend more. We need to take a look at disciplined spending. Santa Claus has a list and he sticks to that. He makes it clear this is his list and this is what everyone gets. Santa never goes over-budget.

"But as humans, we don't make a list. We've got to try to get the emotions out of our spending and be more objective. Something may be two dollars, but when you start adding up all these \$2 (items), suddenly that becomes \$100 and on it goes."

The Canadian government's healthy holiday food guide includes recommendations aimed at helping families eat well over the next month.

It suggests families should try to eat together because that communal time encourages healthier habits. Cook and plan meals in advance for hectic days and make healthy snacks like pre-cut vegetables and fruit easily accessible.

Also, create healthy food traditions by trying a new vegetable recipe or making food-based gifts like jars of dried fruit, nuts or soup mix. And start dessert off with a round of fruit, leaving room for a few bites of something richer.

Aurora-based registered dietician Maria Fisher said holiday weight gain is common because, for many people, the indulgence doesn't last for just one day.

There are multiple parties and gatherings and those gettogethers often force people off regular eating, exercising and sleeping habits.

You can avoid packing on pounds by eating before heading to a social function and refraining from placing treats on counters



Susie Kockerscheidt/Metroland

**A Seneca College professor and certified financial planner says that we should follow Santa's example and make a list and stick to it to avoid breaking the bank.**

and tabletops at home. Be careful when ordering coffeehouse specialty drinks and go easy on calorie-filled alcoholic beverages.

It's OK to indulge, as long as your favourite holiday foods are consumed in moderate portions, she said.

"The problem with gaining a pound or two over the holidays is that most people

don't lose it (afterward)," she said.

"Eat your favourite foods that you can only get over the holidays and skimp on other tasty foods you can get any time of the year. Turkey stuffing is one of my favourites that I only make at Christmas - so I'll pass on the creamy mashed potatoes that I can have anytime."

Overindulging also takes a toll on the

environment.

The Region of York typically sees a 10 per cent spike in waste - garbage, recycling and organics - compared to other winter months, according to Julie Hordowick, program manager of York's integrated waste management strategy.

So the region encourages residents to wrap presents in reusable bags, scarves or fabric and consider giving gift cards or "experiences" rather than "purchasing a lot of stuff that maybe people don't necessarily need," she said.

This year, the region is targeting "avoidable food waste" through its Good Food program.

"That's all geared toward giving people tools to plan their meals, to manage leftovers and ideas for what to do around the holidays to reduce the amount of food waste that you're generating," Hordowick said.

"We've found about 15 to 20 per cent of the green bin is what we would consider to be avoidable food waste. Things people have bought and forgot and thrown out: It's whole produce, leftover lettuce, the leftover casserole that you didn't finish eating."

As part of the Good Food program, the region put out a list of 10 tips aimed at reducing food waste during the holidays.

"We encourage people to stock up on reusable containers so that when they do have guests over and there's leftovers, they've got a really easy way to pack stuff up and share it with their guests rather than it ending up in the green bin," Hordowick said.

"We have recipes you can make ahead and freeze so that you're spending more time with your guests and you've got a way to save the food and portion it out over time. And (we encourage people) to consider potluck as an approach to family occasions so everybody brings a little bit of something and everybody is able to bring it home so leftovers get used up. It's less work for one person and it's often less waste that way."

Remember though, even the experts admit it's tough to stringently stick to a plan.

"Throughout the whole year, you've been quite disciplined," Albanese said.

"You did the best you could and you say 'I've sacrificed all year, my family deserves this'. We tend to use Christmastime as a way of rewarding ourselves for a year of hard work. How do you overcome all this? It's almost impossible. All we can say is be conscious of (spending), try to set money aside and be as close as possible to that budget."

**Sleep and General Dentistry**  
**From Fear of the Dentist to Special Needs**



**we're here for the whole family**

**New Patients Welcome - Emergencies Seen Promptly - Insurance Processing**

**SMILEWORK:)**  
Dental Centres

175 Mostar Street, Unit 105, Stouffville

**To Book Your Appointment**

**Call 905-640-1010**

**or www.SmileWork.ca**