

Outdoor health tips from the Posse:

Getting back on track in 2021

The holiday season is in the rearview mirror and the outdoors season is right in front of us. That means I must stop eating all the big meals and holiday treats and get back to a healthy and normal diet, lest I be too fat to hike this spring.

My weakness has always been sweets, especially cookies. My grandmother always had a supply of homemade chocolate chip cookies around. I could never walk by without grabbing a mitt full on the way out the door. Little has changed.

I could make a New Years resolution to stop overeating and get back to normal, but the first plate of leftover Christmas cookies would break the resolution. My wife does her best to help me stay on track, but I always defile myself. I can eat cookies like Nabisco wants the empty box back.

During the holiday season, stretching all the way back to Thanksgiving, all good intentions of trying to keep your healthy diet on track is a lot easier said than done, especially when everyone is throwing those "fresh from the oven" feasts in front of you.

It is a good thing that the holiday season only comes once a year because the cost of skipping your exercise routine and piling on the mashed potatoes and cookies catches up in a hurry and all your hard work can slip down the proverbial drain. You can avoid that D word (diet) and just get back to common sense eating.

Start by knocking off the sweet stuff. Research shows that sugar intake can be addictive and can lead to an unhealthy cycle of cravings and binges. I offer my addiction to cookies as exhibit "A" for the prosecution.

All of those big holiday meals end with something



Christmas cookies, especially chocolate chips, are my dietary weakness but it is time to get back on track. (tagles/Wikimedia Commons)

sweet. Leaving the leftover cookies and pie in plain view, for an addict like me, is just asking for trouble. Get rid of the sweets and eliminate ALL deserts for the next couple of weeks.

While the cravings decrease, your body will begin to prefer the natural sweet foods, like a piece of fruit.

Your stomach enlarges based on the amount of food you consume. This elasticity of the stomach is why the morning after you ate a huge dinner you wake up starving.

Your stomach can adapt over time to accommodate overeating, but that is not what we seek here.

Eating less will make your stomach "shrink" so that you feel fuller on smaller amounts of food. This does not happen overnight, but stick with it, and in a few days you will feel the difference. By doing this, you can subtract hundreds of calories from your daily intake, and not feel so hungry.

One area that needs no explanation is getting back to your exercise routine. It is really easy to skip the workouts during the holiday and replace it with Olympic style eating events. Reality needs to come into play here, and you need to get back to exercising. After a time off from working out, I like to come back with the cardio first. Running, elliptical and bike riding are all good cardio exercises to help burn off some extra calories.

This is the perfect time to up your protein intake. Medical research shows that proteins are harder for your body to digest, which leads to less of an insulin spike. Protein containing foods are bulkier and lead to a feeling of fullness compared to carbohydrates. Start your day with a high protein breakfast and you should find you are less hungry come lunchtime.

Low fat protein sources are the healthiest. Stay away from the processed food sources and look to chicken, salmon, yogurts and turkey breasts. If you concentrate on high protein

for all your meals, you will cut down on overeating that happens when you just don't feel full.

Another area that should be mentioned is that of cocktails. The holidays seem to be full of fine wines, champagne, mixed drinks and import beers. Every holiday party seems to sing the mantra "drinks before dinner, wine with dinner, and after dinner drinks."

Alcoholic beverages are full of sugar and fat. We drink without taking into account all the added calories. Time to put away the rum filled eggnog and get back to copious amounts of H₂O. Skipping the drinks alone can make a big difference in your daily calorie intake. Another reason to avoid the before dinner cocktail is that alcohol can often spike your appetite, causing you to eat more. Best to return to the water.

Don't beat yourself up. Getting down on yourself is not the way to start out the New Year. We all know it is part of the holiday season to eat like a sanitary landfill; all those special family

recipes like stuffing, pies, and of course, cookies. Being busy with the holidays and skipping the workouts is all part of the season. Accept that and move forward.

And forward I shall move. No more sweets and back to the running everyday for my cardio. Wait...what's this? My wife left out a plate of chocolate chip cookies that the grandkids did not inhale as they usually do. I can't tempt kismet, so I will just grab a mitt full and start the sensible stuff tomorrow.

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press and avid hunter who travels across North and South America in search of adventure and serves as a Director for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the Posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcsl.org

For outdoors or survival related questions or comments, feel free to contact him directly at his email elkhunt77@icloud.com



Mark Rackay
Tips from the Posse