

## Can Cookies be Exchanged for Balance?

| BY JUDY CAPLAN |

Women are always asking me, "With all the cookie exchanges and holiday parties, how can I not gain weight over the holiday season?" Actually it is really quite simple. There are just a few rules you have to follow.

**Rule number one:** Create awareness as part of the holiday spirit. Ask yourself the question, "Where do I want to be weight-wise on January 2<sup>nd</sup>?" Write down the answer on a piece of paper and post it where you can see it every day. For example: "I want to weigh 135 on January 2<sup>nd</sup>." Now don't lose sight of that goal.

**Rule number two:** Set into motion actions that will lead to achieving your goal. For

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instance, continue your exercise program. If you don't have one, now is the time to start. Don't wait until the first of the year to begin. Exercise is the best calorie burner there is. Exercise also increases endorphins which promote a sense of well being, something you will need lots of at this stressful time of year. Don't concern yourself with weight loss now. The goal will be to maintain your weight while wading through the mine field of delicious, high calorie food that will be everywhere you go.

**Rule number three:** Set a carbohydrate limit for the day. Allow yourself a daily total of six carbohydrate servings. Every time you eat a cookie over the holidays, you have to subtract some other carbohydrate from your diet that day. Here are some examples of one carbohydrate serving:

- One slice of whole wheat bread
- 1/2 of an English muffin
- 1/2 of a small baked potato
- 8 stick pretzels
- 3 Hershey kisses
- 1/2 cup of ice cream
- 1/4 of a small order of French fries

Any starchy food that contains 15 grams of carbohydrate is considered one serving. Read labels and do a quick calculation before you eat. Keep a food log. This helps you know how many carbs you have eaten, and how many you have left. If you eat all your carbs in cookies, balance the rest of the day with fresh veggies, lean protein, a few nuts or other healthy fat, and a piece of fruit. This will help control additional high calorie foods and add balance to your diet.

**Rule number four:** Make your own cookies to create delicious, desirable cookies that won't load you down. You can often take favorite recipes and make them healthier by choosing ingredients like whole wheat pastry flour and canola oil rather than white refined flour and shortening. Whole grain pastry flour is light enough for cookies and adds fiber. The fiber in the whole grain slows the digestion of sugar in the cookies. This will cause a slower rise in blood sugar. This slower rise will help ward off the energy crash that comes from eating too many sweets.

Many cookies call for shortening, like *Crisco*, which is made with hydrogenated fats. Even if the can says "trans fat free" check the label. If you see the words "hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated" it contains artery clogging trans fat. Substitute *Land O Lakes Spreadable Butter* for shortening as it is trans fat free (it has some saturated fat) and contains canola oil which is high in monounsaturated fats and good for your heart.

**Rule number five:** Make lighter calorie meals during the holidays. Entree salads and soups are good options. Hearty soups made with vegetable stock hit the spot in cold weather. Pair a white bean and pesto soup with a chicken Caesar salad for a yummy quick dinner. Keep roast chicken, cooked whole grain pasta, and washed salad greens on hand for easy to prepare meals. Plan ahead by purchasing a crock pot or rice steamer. You can throw meals together in the morning and come home to piping hot dishes in the evening. Add a salad and you are ready to go.

If you like to hunt and gather your meals, pick up a salad from the salad bar, a rotisserie chicken, and microwave some fresh veggies. Order sushi, make your own edamame in the steamer, and grill some salmon. You can even stop by your favorite Mexican restaurant and pick up an order of whole beans, guacamole and salsa. Come home and make your own quesadillas using whole grain tortillas, grated *Cabot 75% reduced fat cheddar cheese* and top with the fixings from the restaurant.

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**Rule number six:** Enjoy the holidays. This means you need to strike the right balance between exercise, carbohydrate intake (cookies), healthy eating and merriment. If you tend to go "hog wild" at this time of year and then are remorseful at the New Year, stop and reconsider. Make your New Year's resolutions now, and you might find the season and the scale better balanced at year's end. **wfm**

*Judy Caplan is a registered dietitian in Vienna, Virginia with a private practice in preventive health. Her children's book, *Gobey Gets Full - Good Nutrition in a Nutshell*, is now available. Visit [www.gobeyfull.com](http://www.gobeyfull.com) for more information about Judy and her company, Nutrition Ammunition.*