

**Work Well's Holiday Challenge:  
"Don't gain a pound from Thanksgiving to New Year's"**

This 7-week program was piloted at the MN Dept. of Health. One message went out each Thursday on the department's intranet. Thursday was weigh-in day.

Evaluation of this program was qualitative. One could also set up a survey for employees to anonymously input their weight change up or down for a department grand total.

Below are the weekly messages and tracking card. They were developed by Linda Feltes and Maria Rogness. The tracking card was designed by Kim Engwer-Moylan.

All of these materials can be adapted for your use.

# Holiday Weight Challenge tracking card

 <b>Work<sup>SM</sup> Well</b>	<b>Holiday Weight Challenge*</b>
 <b>Date</b>	 <b>Weight</b> 
Nov. 22	
Nov. 29	
Dec. 6	
Dec. 13	
Dec. 20	
Dec. 27	
Jan. 3	

**\*Don't gain a pound from Thanksgiving to New Year's**

## Work Well's Holiday Challenge: Week 1

Don't change a thing!

Work Well would like to issue you the following challenge this holiday season (from Thanksgiving to New Year's): Don't gain a pound.

Yep, it's a challenge! Many of us typically gain a few pounds over the holiday season. And more often than not, we never take it off.

Feel free to use the tracking card below to record your weight each week for the next six weeks. And feel free to share your tips and stories with Work Well. E-mail [Linda.Feltes@state.mn.us](mailto:Linda.Feltes@state.mn.us).

**Holiday Weight Challenge\***

★ Date ★	★ Weight ★
Nov. 22	
Nov. 29	
Dec. 6	
Dec. 13	
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Dec. 27	
Jan. 3	

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Here are some suggestions that may help:

- [Top 10 List to Prevent Holiday Weight Gain \(PDF\)](#)
- Google "holiday weight gain"

The challenge is on. Good luck!

## Work Well's Holiday Challenge: Week 2

Today is Thursday, weigh-in day for those participating in the Holiday Weight Challenge. Don't forget to record your weight. It will help keep your mind from playing games with you.

If you'd like to participate in the challenge, use the tracking card below to record your weight each week for the next five weeks.

**Holiday Weight Challenge\***

★ Date ★	★ Weight ★
Nov . 22	
Nov . 29	
Dec . 6	
Dec . 13	
Dec . 20	
Dec . 27	
Jan . 3	

**\*Don't gain a pound from Thanksgiving to New Year's**

How on earth shall we not gain a pound from Thanksgiving to New Year's?

\*First off, at your weigh-in today, if you've gained a pound, be gentle with yourself. You have the next 5 weeks to be more active and enjoy healthy foods instead of those with lots of calories and little value.

\*How about something practical like: no matter what you do, think about adding movement, no matter how small. Sure your coworkers may look twice to see you lifting the phone book over your head repeatedly, but at least it's something to talk about. Be creative. Fidgeters burn more calories. Just goes to show that every movement counts.

\*Park in the farthest corner of your lot or on the upper floor. Walk the stairs in to work. Rest at every landing if need be. Walking the stairs is still walking the stairs. Speed is not a requirement.

\*Don't reach for that holiday sweet unless you know you have time to walk the skyway on your break that day. (Or maybe the key here is to eat a cookie only while you're walking...).

\*While your lunch is heating up in the microwave, hold onto the counter and do ankle circles. Spell the names of those you love with your toes. Or walk circles around the table.

\*For every 30 minutes you're at your keyboard, stand up, sit down, circle your hands and wrists, stretch your neck from side to side, stand up, sit down, stand up, stretch your arms out, bring your knees up one at a time, sit down, stand up, stretch some more...

\*Schedule a daily stretch break in GroupWise. (The "select recurring" feature makes it easy.) While you're at it, add a colleague to the appointment.

\*Accidentally drink one too many servings of eggnog? Walk in place at your desk while you're reading. Take the long way to the restrooms and back. Drink more water.

\*If the person you're e-mailing is in the building, why not get up and go talk to them? E-mail is more efficient, but this is a more personal approach and it beats just pressing send for physical activity.

\*Turn a meeting into a walking meeting. You'll be surprised at how well you remember the conversation as your movement will more fully engage your brain.

\*If your section or unit goes out for a lunch together choose a spot downtown and walk the round about way there and back. Of course, you'll want to choose a healthy lunch--fill you plate with fruits and vegetables. Try the whole-grain option.

\*Stand while you're talking on the phone. Gently march, stretch each leg to the front, side and back or raise your water bottle up and down.

\*Checking to see if it's snowing outside? Do some stretches standing at the window (don't worry, no one can see in).

Just move SOMETHING. It all counts.

### Work Well's Holiday Challenge: Week 3

Thursday is weigh-in day for those participating in the Holiday Weight Challenge. Don't forget to record your weight!

Here are some rationalizations that might come up in your holiday self-talk:

- I'm stressed.
- I'm too busy.
- It's the holidays. Why not?
- This is the only time of year I get to eat these foods.

Perhaps the challenge is really to participate in this season as reasonably as we can while still making daily healthy choices for ourselves. This isn't the only time of the year we'll see THAT cookie. Exercise isn't just something to fit in IF we have time. Weight maintenance is part of the larger issue to choose, on a daily basis, healthy choices every day. Your health is for the long run.

The Mayo Clinic offers us some suggestions from those who have successfully lost weight and kept it off:

- Monitor your weight regularly. People who weigh themselves at least once a week are more successful in keeping off the pounds. Monitoring your weight can tell you whether your efforts are working and can help you detect small weight gains before they become larger. (New self-talk: I'm on track!)
- Be consistent. Sticking to your healthy-weight plan during the week, on the weekends, and amidst vacation and holidays increases your chances of long-term success. (New self-talk: I'm worth it!)

For more tips, visit Mayo Clinic's site, [Weight maintenance: keep the weight off permanently.](#)

## Work Well's Holiday Challenge: Week 4

According to recent research, we are presented with, on average, over 200 food decisions every day. If we eat without thinking, because we're tired or busy or stressed, many of our food decisions may be poor ones, influenced more by cues that entice us than our own wish to be healthy.

For many of us, this is holiday crunch week. In spite of your busyness, strive to pay good attention to what you eat.

And don't forget to weigh and record your weight!

For more study findings, read Kim Severson's article in the *New York Times*: [\*Seduced by Snacks? No, Not You.\*](#)

[http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/11/dining/11snac.html?\\_r=3&oref=slogin&pagewanted=print&oref=slogin&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/11/dining/11snac.html?_r=3&oref=slogin&pagewanted=print&oref=slogin&oref=slogin)

## Work Well's Holiday Challenge: Week 5

Is there such a thing as healthy pecan pie?

Many of us come face to face with our very favorite, traditional foods this time of year. And Work Well is after you to not gain a pound. "Impossible!" you say. "Impossible?" we say.

Can we have our pie and eat it too? We called in our team for suggestions. This week our team was members of the MDH Vegetarian Healthy Lunch Club. One member said: Try the *Cooking Light* Web site. Another suggested we Google the words *healthy pecan pie*.

We Googled *healthy pecan pie* and were directed to a [Cooking Light](#) recipe. (How's that for teamwork?!) The *Cooking Light* recipe shaves off 100 calories per slice. (You'd still best not eat the whole pie.)

Google *healthy + your favorite family recipe* and see what you find.

Here are some other expert suggestions for holiday eating:

- Make conversations a priority.
- Rather than nibbling, make yourself a small plate of food. Sit and enjoy it.
- If you drink alcohol, lighten your wine with some sparkling water.
- Don't forget to record your Thursday weight.

Have a fabulous holiday break!

[http://food.cookinglight.com/cooking/recipefinder.dyn?action=displayRecipe&recipe\\_id=222515](http://food.cookinglight.com/cooking/recipefinder.dyn?action=displayRecipe&recipe_id=222515)

## Work Well's Holiday Weight Challenge: Week 6

### K.I.S.S.

Seems like the pace of life is increasing exponentially. It wouldn't take much for the holiday season to put us into a tailspin. Sometimes we use eating as a stress-buster. Maybe there are better ways.

Like the K.I.S.S. principle: *Keep It Simple, Sweetheart.*

To practice the K.I.S.S. principle, we need to identify our sources of stress. Then notice how we respond to them. Next, think through which ones you might be able to manage better.

- Start here: list your internal stressors. These might include fears, anxieties and unrealistic expectations.
- Then list your external stressors, such as family or work demands, lack of sleep, no time for exercise. Mayo Clinic's [Tools for Healthier Lives](#) Web site includes a simple stress assessment that you can take online.
- Next, list ways you might better manage your sources of stress. Just as what causes you stress may be internal or external, so may be your solutions.

Here's an example: You have young children and having a messy house causes you to be stressed.

- External solutions may include: teaching your children to clean up after themselves, limiting their number of toys, and enlisting your spouse to clean up.
- An internal solution may be to admit to yourself that children make messes and a spotless house may be unrealistic for now. It may also be needlessly harming your health. (The Arthritis Foundation's book, *Guide to Managing your Arthritis 2001.*)

Consider taking the utmost care of yourself:

- Get enough sleep
- Practice a relaxation technique such as deep breathing or visualization
- Eat your favorite healthy foods
- Walk outside
- Take time for your hobby
- Simply say "no" and K.I.S.S.

<http://mayoclinic.com/health/stress-assessment/SR00029>

## Work Well's Holiday Weight Challenge: Week 7

Today is weigh-in day for those participating in the Holiday Weight Challenge. You made it to the finish! How'd the challenge go for you? Were you able to maintain your weight for the last six weeks? What self-talk or strategies helped? What hurdles were cast in your way? Work Well would love to hear your feedback; please feel free to e-mail Linda Feltes at [Linda.Feltes@state.mn.us](mailto:Linda.Feltes@state.mn.us).

There is a right number of calories for you to eat each day. This number depends on your age, activity level, and whether you are trying to gain, maintain, or lose weight. You could choose to use up your entire allotment on a few high-calorie foods, but chances are, you won't get the full range of vitamins and nutrients your body needs to be healthy.

Why not get the most nutrition out of your calories? Choose nutritionally-rich foods from each food group each day, those packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber, and other nutrients, but lower in calories. To read more about it, visit CDC's [Healthy Weight](#) Web page. Then, look up your favorite foods on a site called [The World's Healthiest Foods](#) and see what they offer.

The basics of good nutrition have not changed. Meals full of vegetables, fruits and whole grains and a small serving of a protein-rich food remain the gold standard of a wholesome diet. But it's good to know that this last year brought some new nutrition findings, as Jane Brody summarizes in the New York Times article [No Gimmicks: Eat Less and Exercise More](#).

Eat well. Work Well.

[www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/nutrition/nutrition\\_for\\_everyone/healthy\\_weight/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/nutrition/nutrition_for_everyone/healthy_weight/index.htm)  
[www.whfoods.com/foodstoc.php](http://www.whfoods.com/foodstoc.php)  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/01/health/nutrition/01brod.html?ex=1199941200&en=e4fca0de725078d2&ei=5070&emc=eta1>

## Work Well's Holiday Challenge Week 8:

**You made it to the finish!** How'd the Challenge go for you? Were you able to maintain your weight for the last six weeks? What self-talk or strategies helped? What hurdles were cast in your way? Work Well would love to hear your feedback; please feel free to e-mail Linda Feltes.

**There is a right number of calories for you to eat each day.** This number depends on your age, activity level, and whether you are trying to gain, maintain, or lose weight. You could choose to use up your entire allotment on a few high-calorie foods, but chances are, you won't get the full range of vitamins and nutrients your body needs to be healthy.

**Why not get the most nutrition out of your calories** Choose nutritionally-rich foods from each food group each day – those packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber, and other nutrients, but lower in calories.

[http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/nutrition/nutrition\\_for\\_everyone/healthy\\_weight/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/nutrition/nutrition_for_everyone/healthy_weight/index.htm))

**Here are the world's healthiest foods:** <http://www.whfoods.com/foodstoc.php>. Look up your favorites and see what they offer.

**The basics of good nutrition have not changed.** Meals full of vegetables, fruits and whole grains and a small serving of a protein-rich food remain the gold standard of a wholesome diet.

This last year brought some new nutrition findings, as Jane Brody summarizes in the New York Times:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/01/health/nutrition/01brod.html?ex=1199941200&en=e4fca0de725078d2&ei=5070&emc=eta1>

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