



220 Parker St. Warsaw, IN 46580

To enroll: (800) 428-0408, option 2

Current students: (800) 428-0408, option 1

info@trinityschool.org

Focus on Fitness: Preventing Winter Weight Gain

Winter Woes

As the temperature drops, it can seem like our motivation does too. After all, it's easier to curl up with coffee and a blanket than it is to brave the elements. If you typically experience winter weight gain, you're not alone. One study found that people put on an average of five to seven pounds during the winter months.¹ To avoid this predicament, try to adopt whole-person wellness practices that support your mental, emotional, and physical health.

What Causes Winter Weight Gain?

If you see the scale climbing, you might feel frustrated or discouraged. Several factors can cause those additional pounds, and they're often simpler to address than you think. Here are a few common reasons for winter weight gain:

- **Holiday Meals:** With Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's all happening within the space of a few weeks, you probably have lots of gatherings on your calendar. As you load up on family recipes and traditional goodies, your body might not be able to burn the excess calorie consumption.
- **Less Daylight:** Less daylight means less time to go outside and be active. If you get off work at 5:00 p.m., there's a good chance it's already dark outside, so you aren't as motivated to go out for a run or hit the gym. When it's dark, our bodies release melatonin, which causes us to feel sleepy and less alert, so it takes more effort to get up and be productive.
- **Fewer Fruits & Veggies:** During warmer months, most fruits and vegetables are at their peak season. It's easy to find all kinds of nutritious foods when farmers' markets and grocery stores stock fresh produce in bulk. When those items are harder to access, you might find yourself reaching for convenient comfort food, which can contribute to a rise in weight.

Do any of these challenges sound familiar? Luckily, there are plenty of ways to keep them from holding you back this winter.

Kiss Your Winter Weight Gain Goodbye

Don't let the cold months keep you from feeling your best. If you want to prevent excess pounds and focus on supporting your wellness, try our tips:

- **Eat More Protein and Fiber:** Consuming too many carbs can contribute to fat storage. Unfortunately, many of our favorite comfort foods, such as fried or processed items, are carb-heavy. If you want to improve your diet and reduce your snacking temptations, add more protein and fiber into your meals. Healthy choices include eggs, nuts, low-sugar yogurt, and seeds, as well as leafy green vegetables, berries, and whole grains. You'll feel more satisfied after your meals, which will dampen the desire to fill up on unhealthy choices.
- **Buy Frozen Produce:** Since it can sometimes be hard to find, or afford, plenty of fresh fruits and veggies in the middle of winter, you might have to get creative. Frozen produce is harvested and preserved at its most nutritious point, offering maximum health value.² You don't just have to thaw these foods in the microwave and eat them. You can make smoothies, salsa, soup, or even "nice" cream with the goodies you find in the freezer aisle. You can also flash-freeze the harvest from your garden before the weather turns.

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- **Plan Meals Around Your Schedule:** Whether it's pumpkin pie, Christmas cookies, or stuffing, your family's or friends' recipes might be your greatest weakness. Try to avoid going to gatherings hungry. Plan a healthy meal before you leave or bring a healthy dish with you so that you won't be tempted to overeat when you're with your loved ones. It's okay to indulge in a few of your favorite things, but stay aware of what your body needs and not just what you want. Acknowledge your serving sizes. Some experts even recommend setting a discreet timer on your phone to remind you to be mindful and savor the food instead of eating too much and feeling miserable later. Another trick is to spend extra time chewing your food, which can also aid digestion.
- **Stay Hydrated:** Water is the best replacement for sugary, calorie-filled drinks and snacks. When you hydrate before a meal, you'll feel full, which will make you less likely to overeat. While there's no one-size-fits-all recommendation for the amount of water you should drink in a day, the general rule is about 64 ounces.³ Try to drink a couple of large glasses of water in the morning and a couple more throughout the day. Avoid drinking too much before bedtime; otherwise, you might find yourself waking up in the middle of the night to visit the bathroom.
- **Support Your Metabolism:** Eating nutritious foods and drinking plenty of water will help you jump-start your weight loss. There are also other things you can do to get your metabolism in gear. For example, some research shows that green tea may positively impact your metabolism.⁴ The plant compound in green tea encourages your body to burn fat. B vitamins also play a crucial role in increasing your metabolic rate, so try to incorporate them into your natural diet or take supplements.

- **Make Exercise Fun:** It's tough to get motivated to stay active when days are short and temperatures are frigid, but maintaining a consistent fitness schedule will help you avoid extra pounds. It might even give you some wiggle-room to indulge (wisely) in your favorite treats. Get creative with your exercise routine by switching up your activities and having a friend keep you accountable. It's much harder to back out of an evening walk when you know someone is counting on you as a partner. You can also explore new wellness practices like yoga or Pilates, which can easily be done indoors. By coming up with creative ways to make exercise fun, you can stay active, reduce weight gain, and even support your emotional and mental wellness.

Conclusion

Between the holiday season and the cooler temperatures, it's no surprise that people gain weight in the winter, but you don't have to wait until spring to get in shape. By being intentional with your eating schedule, prioritizing healthy food, and staying committed to an exercise routine, you can maintain a healthy lifestyle even through the dreary winter months.

Do you want to take your wellness practices to the next level? If you dream of inspiring others to live their best, fullest lives, consider becoming a Certified Holistic Fitness Specialist or a Certified Nutritional Consultant. At Trinity School of Natural Health, we offer leading, online programs that can equip you to guide others toward optimal wellness. [Contact us](#) to speak to an enrollment specialist today.

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