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EAT YOUR WAY TO A HEALTHY, HAPPY NEW YEAR

Australians can take some simple steps to avoid gaining weight and wasting food this festive season, AMA Vice President, Dr Tony Bartone, said today.

“Christmas Day is often accepted as a day for over-indulgence in food, alcohol, and confectionery,” Dr Bartone said.

“Some Australians will consume more than 25,000 kilojoules – or 6000 calories – on the day, which is three times the amount of energy needed by a moderately active adult.

“It’s no surprise that many of us will gain a kilo or two over the holidays, but it’s not inevitable.

“There are many practical ways to avoid weight gain over the festive season.

“First, consider how much food you actually need to purchase and prepare. When entertaining, there can be a tendency to over-cater, and much of this food is thrown away.

“According to the 2017 RaboDirect Financial Health Barometer, Australians waste almost \$10 billion of food every year, with the average household throwing away 14 per cent of food bought – about \$1050 each.

“A healthy serve of fresh salad, especially at the start of lunch or dinner, is a simple suggestion which allows people to fill up on fresh vegetables.

“Drink plenty of water and watch the alcohol intake. This is really important. Space your drinks out with water, or drink low-alcohol beers, wines, and mixed drinks. Lower alcohol often means lower calories.

“Consider swapping full fat cream for a lower-fat option, such as yoghurt, and use vegetable sticks with dips instead of crackers or corn chips.

“Watch your portion sizes. A little bit of a lot quickly adds up. Just because food is there, you do not have to eat it.

“Slow down and enjoy the food you are eating. And instead of a post-lunch nap, go for a walk or a bike ride, or encourage others to join you in a game of cricket.

“These steps can help keep your weight in check, and make your New Year resolutions easier to keep.”

Background

- According to CSIRO, four out of five Australians do not eat the recommended five servings of vegetables and two of fruit daily.
- One-third of daily food consumption comes from discretionary foods – energy-dense foods that are typically high in saturated fats, sugar, and salt.
- In 2014-15, nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) of Australian adults were overweight or obese, up from 57 per cent in 1995.
- One in four children (aged 2-17) were overweight or obese in 2014-15.
- Overweight and obesity was responsible for 7 per cent of the total health burden in Australia in 2011.

- In 2011-12, obesity was estimated to cost the Australian economy \$8.6 billion. The World Obesity Federation estimated that rose to \$12 billion in 2017 and has forecast it to rise to \$21 billion by 2025.
 - Australia's obesity rate (28 per cent) is the fifth highest among Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, behind the United States of America (38 per cent), Mexico (33 per cent), New Zealand (32 per cent), and Hungary (30 per cent).
 - Being overweight or obese is associated with a higher death rate, cutting two to four years off the life expectancy of a person with a Body Mass Index (BMI) between 30 and 35, and eight to 10 years for a person with a BMI of over 40.
 - Increased BMI is also linked to an increased risk of death from colon, rectum, prostate, cervical, and breast cancers.
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