

# Holidays/Business Trip

## Prepare for Travel

Many clients tell me that they feel anxious about gaining weight while on holidays or a business trip. I used to be concerned myself as I usually gained 4 to 5 pounds every time I was away, but I learned that the key to staying in control is to plan a strategy before you go.

## Making a Travel Plan

About a week before your trip, create a diet strategy. I want you to think about this in advance so that you can remind yourself of it every day before you leave. Decide how closely you'll follow your eating plan, specifically what exceptions you'll make and how much weight, if any, you'll allow yourself to gain. These decisions are individual. There are no right or wrong answers. Some people do better if they try to follow their diet as closely as possible when they're away so that they don't gain any weight. This strategy however is totally unrealistic for most people. If your eating rules are too strict, you might get fed up and abandon your diet altogether.

### A better strategy might be one of the following:

- Allow yourself a few hundred extra calories every day (this is what I do)
- Follow your usual plan every day but add minor splurges on a few occasions
- Follow your diet every day except for a splurge on the last day

Using any one of these strategies might cause a small weight gain (assuming your splurges aren't too big), which is reasonable and certainly much better than gaining a lot of weight. You'll feel better about yourself if you decide in advance that this is what you want to do. You won't feel very good if you try not to gain weight, eat more than you'd planned and end up gaining weight anyway.

To figure out what your strategy should be, think about which foods or drinks you'll most want to have while you're away. Will you enjoy sipping cocktails or wine at the bar? Indulging in a rich dessert after dinner? Sampling new and unusual foods?

Once you create your strategy, write it down and read it every day until you leave (and every day while you're there), So you'll have this strategy firmly in your mind.

### How Not to Gain Too Much

Try to think of specific situations that might arise while you're away that will test your resolve. Then figure out what you'll do about them. E.g. Drinking alcohol during the day tends to make you eat more in the evening so skip the lunchtime drink and don't drink alcohol until evening.

There are some solutions that clients use to help prevent gaining too much weight while they're away from home:

- ✓ **Exercise More.** It will help counteract small amounts of overeating. You can either do formal exercise or take advantage of recreational activities that require a moderate to high expenditure of energy.
- ✓ **Eat brunch instead of breakfast and lunch.** If you sleep later than usual, combining these two meals will allow you to eat a larger meal in one sitting.
- ✓ **Carry food with you.** If you have a long trip ahead of you, consider bringing along some favourite foods permitted on your eating plan. While in transit, be careful not to eat out of boredom. Also beware of eating more meals than you had planned, due to time changes. Some clients have asked the hotel in advance for a mini fridge for their room or to have the contents of the mini bar removed so they may use it. Try to find a local grocery store to stock up on nuts, seeds & fruit etc.

Use the strategies you've already learned: Take your weekly hand-outs with you and make sure you read your Response Cards, particularly your Advantages of Losing Weight – Response Card.

## During the Trip Home

So you're on the way home. You tried to follow your predetermined diet plan while you were away. How did you do? You should be giving yourself credit for everything you did right. But maybe you had a few slips. Are you dreading getting on the scale?

Tell yourself. *When I get on the scale, I might be heavier ...That's okay, I planned to gain a little weight ...As soon as I get home, I'll have more control over my food and my environment, and I'll lose it again.* **Make your trip home your symbolic transition from holiday eating to getting back to your weight-loss food plan.**

Plan what you're going to eat for the rest of the day as well as tomorrow. Many clients try to quickly undo their weight gain by overly restricting their eating when they return. Avoid this temptation because it will put you at risk for overeating within a few days. Make sure to re-establish your helpful eating behaviours, such as eating everything slowly and while sitting down, planning your meals in writing the night before, and recording everything you eat on your food diary. Make sure you have arranged your consultation and weigh-in as soon as you get home, the sooner the better.

### What are you thinking?

Holidays are ripe for sabotaging thoughts. Prepare for them now, so you can convincingly respond to them in the moment.

**Sabotaging Thought:** Oh, no, I won't have control over food while I'm on holidays. What if I gain a lot of weight?

**Helpful Response:** I've developed my holiday eating strategies. I'll get it out right now and read it so I am better prepared.

**Sabotaging Thought:** I've been so good. I should be able to eat whatever I want while I'm away. If I can't eat whatever I want, I won't have any fun.

**Helpful Response:** It's not all or nothing, I won't have to deprive myself completely. I'll still be able to eat some foods I like. I won't be giving up all pleasures of eating, and I won't be giving up all fun. Besides, when I return home, I'll be happy when I step on the scale and realize I haven't gained 5 pounds or more. It will be worth it.

## Stay in Control When Eating Out

When you go to a restaurant, family gathering, holiday celebration, or other special event, you'll encounter lots of triggers: the sight and smell of food, people eating and drinking, people offering you food and drink, a festive atmosphere. Many people apply special eating and drinking rules to special occasions. They give themselves permission to indulge. That's why so many clients come undone.

### Plan to Eat Out

Today, you'll create a plan for eating out and set a date to implement this plan at a restaurant sometime this week. Sticking to your eating plan every time you eat out or while celebrating is a skill that requires preparation and practice. Here's how you should prepare:

1. **Choose a suitable day and place.** Pick a day this week when you're not particularly stressed and plan to eat at a slightly earlier time than usual, so you won't be too hungry. Select a restaurant that serves foods permitted on your plan.
2. **Go with a friend.** Choose someone whom you know won't try to push food on you.
3. **Plan in advance how much you're going to eat.** It's fine to eat a little more than usual – perhaps up to 25% more calories than you ordinarily would have eaten for that meal. If you don't eat out very often, the extra food shouldn't adversely affect your weight loss.
4. **Anticipate the sabotaging thoughts you might have.** You might think, *"it's okay to eat more than I've planned because .... Everyone else is eating a lot ... I rarely get to eat these foods ... It won't hurt ... I can start again tomorrow ... I should eat to get my money's worth."* Make response cards to read before you go and bring them with you in case you need them, including your Advantages Response Card.
5. **Plan how you'll tolerate cravings.** What can you say to yourself? What can you do? Review the Anti-craving techniques you have already learned.
6. **When your food arrives, portion off the food you can eat.** Immediately push the extra food not on your food plan to one side of the plate or onto a side plate.
7. **Assess your success.** Once you get back home, think about how you did. If you weren't able to follow your food plan, what will you do differently next time? Beware of self-critical thoughts. If you had trouble, the task was just too challenging. Try it again and prepare yourself better before you go.
8. **If you did well but feel disgruntled because you couldn't eat everything you wanted to then work on your sabotaging thoughts.** Give yourself credit for following through with your food plan and work on acceptance. *"Oh well, I couldn't eat the way I used to eat. But I do really want to lose weight so it's good that I limited myself."*

**Tip:**

*If you ate out without overeating, give yourself lots of credit. But don't undo your good eating when you get home. Some clients tell themselves, "I was so good ... Now I deserve to treat myself," and then eat an unplanned snack. Of course, it's fine to plan in advance to eat something when you get home. I purposely avoid eating dessert when I'm out because I look forward to my evening snack every night. If I've already eaten dessert, I won't be able to have that snack.*

## Eating-Out Strategies

The following strategies can help you to stay in control while eating out. As you read then, watch out for sabotaging thoughts, such as, "I couldn't do that."

**My clients and I routinely do these things and they work:**

- ✓ **Tell the waiter how you'd like your food prepared.** Don't hesitate to ask for substitutions or special arrangements; waiters are accustomed to accommodating diners. The worst that can happen is that they can't do what you requested, but in my experience, this is rare.
- ✓ **Order smaller portions.** Order a starter/appetizer as a main course.
- ✓ **If you're eating at a buffet, look at all the food options before filling your plate.** The high-carb foods tend to be at the start of the buffet and the proteins at the end so choose wisely. Fill your plate and remind yourself that *this is it – no seconds.*
- ✓ **Practice what you know.** Eat slowly and notice every bite, even if you're distracted by your companions and the environment.
- ✓ **When you're finished eating, make it final.** Arrange your cutlery so that the handles rest in the remaining food. Place your napkin on your plate and push your plate away.

## What are you thinking?

**Sabotaging Thought:** I'm not the kind of person who can make special requests. I'm afraid that I will annoy the waiter.

**Helpful Response:** People make special requests all the time. I'm entitled to do so, too. Asking the waiter to modify my meal is okay. If I had an allergy to certain foods then I would have to make special requests, this is no different.