

# Resolutions or No Resolutions?

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*"Procrastination is the art of keeping up with yesterday." - Don Marquis*

Over the holidays, I got a humorous post from one of my clients. The post says, "Do you know what I got for Christmas? Fat. I got fat." I couldn't help but started laughing as I am sure many of my friends or clients could relate after all the holiday festivities and indulgences.

With that said, I do have some good news for you. Contrary to the popular belief that most people gain from five to ten pounds over the holidays, a study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* found that the average weight gain was just over a pound. Most of that weight gain occurred during the six-week interval between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. The researchers asked the volunteers about several factors that might influence weight change, such as stress, hunger, activity level, changes in smoking habits, or number of holiday parties attended. They found that only two factors influence weight gain: level of hunger and level of activity. Volunteers who said they were much more active or much less hungry were the least likely to gain weight over the holidays, and some even lost weight. Those who reported being less active or more hungry had the greatest holiday weight gain. Less than 10 percent of volunteers gained more than 5 pounds over the holiday season.

Now, the bad news is most of us don't end up losing that pound after the holidays. When the study volunteers were weighed a year after the study began, they had not lost the extra weight gained during the holidays, and ended the year a pound and a half (1.4 lbs) heavier than they were the year before. No wonder an average adult can easily gain 10 to 20 pounds over the years of adulthood! So, if you did gain a couple pounds over the holidays like most Americans, let's prove this study wrong and resolve to get back to your pre-holiday weight ASAP.

Speaking of resolve, the cynical side of me often questions the effectiveness of New Year's resolutions. I feel that resolutions are perhaps one way for us to procrastinate and wait until some arbitrary date that symbolizes "new beginnings" to start what we should have months ago. To my surprise, I came across this study published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychology* that found people who made New Year's resolutions had higher rates of success at making the desired behavior change (losing weight, exercising more, and quitting smoking) than people who did not make resolutions. After six months, 46 percent of the resolution makers were successful compared to just 4 percent of the people who did not make resolutions. Cliché or not, that's some pretty good odds. So let's write them down and make it happen. For any health and fitness related resolutions, the BMI team is here to help! Cheers to a healthy, happy and successful 2013 ☺

## References

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