The holidays are a notoriously difficult time to avoid putting on extra pounds. Holiday parties with friends revolve around food and drink. And let's face it: they're a blast. I don't intend to miss any this year and I doubt you do either. Let's figure out how to have some fun without ending up in drastic diet mode, come January. Remember, it's a lot easier to avoid gaining weight than it is to lose it.

Here are some things you can do before a holiday party to avoid trouble.

\*Don't arrive hungry. If it happens, load your plate with vegetables - this bulk will help you feel full. Then eat only a little of your favorites, be it the red meat or the carbs.

\*Sugar is everywhere during the holidays!!! When it comes to eating sweets and dessert, just use one solid rule: don't eat wheat or dairy. How do you do that?  If there is pie, just eat the inside. Dark chocolate is your friend, in fact, I have a thin friend who ALWAYS has an individually wrapped dark chocolate in her purse. When we go out to lunch, she hands me a chocolate - 60 calories - and we skip dessert.

\*Let's talk alcohol. Some people tell me "I'm not a sugar person" without realizing how much sugar they get in the liquid form...alcohol. This holiday season, be aware of how many drinks you are consuming and try to have only two, if possible. After two, your stomach can become irritated, revving your appetite back up. Even if you have two drinks a night in a  week this is an extra \_\_\_\_\_ calories. Drink a sparkling water or a mock-tail. Enlist a friend to join you in drinking less - these things are always easier with a wingman.

\*Pace yourself. I remember researching weight loss when I first started practicing naturopathic medicine 20 years ago. One of the most valuable pieces of information was to pace yourself. If you know you have a party in the evening, eat light for breakfast and lunch, without starving yourself. Celery with almond/peanut butter or an egg with spinach for breakfast and a salad or vegetable soup with a little protein for lunch. If you know there is a lunch party, eat light for the other two meals. This is how thin people stay thin.

There are also some supplements that can help.

- Digestive enzymes. Studies say that digestive enzymes that help your system break down your food will help with weight loss.

- Probiotics. Beneficial bacteria decrease yeast and other pathogenic organisms. If you crave sugar more than normally, it could be an overgrowth of yeast. Taking a probiotic will decrease the yeast.

- Alpha-Lipoic Acid in tablet form has been shown to significantly increase the loss of weight in people on a lower-calorie diet.

Lastly, make sure you drink enough to water throughout the day. Half of your body weight in ounces of water in a day is a great goal to shoot for. In a study published in the Journal of Clinical and Diagnostic Research, overweight patients who drank 500ml (17oz) of water 3xday half an hour prior to meals lost weight. Drinking water increased metabolism 30% in a study from the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism. Sometimes the feeling of hunger can mask what is actually dehydration.

I hope this information is helpful, sometimes just being aware can decrease the possibility of those extra pounds.