

Christmas crimes

Done the damage? Nutritionist Charlotte Watts has on-the-spot help

OOPS...	WHY DID I DO THAT?	THE DAMAGE	SOS HELP
'WHAT GYM? I'M USUALLY SO GOOD, BUT I CAN'T SEEM TO GET GOING.'	Lack of motivation can be a sign of low B-vitamin levels, which help us produce energy. These are depleted by alcohol and sugar, so try a good-quality supplement such as Viridian High Five B-Complex, £5.90 for 90 capsules at naturalwayhealth.co.uk .	We can tip the balance of 'good vs bad' around this time of excess. Exercise is needed for circulation, metabolism and blood-sugar control – recovering from Christmas can be harder without it.	Keep the body moving and interested by changing your routine; go for an invigorating country walk, try a yoga class, but keep moving. Tap your whole head with your fingertips to wake up your brain and motivate your body.
'I DON'T SEEM TO HAVE AN APPETITE OFF-SWITCH AT THIS TIME OF YEAR.'	Our metabolism slows down to conserve heat in winter, but central heating confuses this. Get out into the cold regularly to raise your metabolism and burn some calories to produce heat.	Our bodies don't realise that we won't need as much energy as our ancestors to heat us up in winter. So, a raised appetite can overload the digestive system, which can make us feel sluggish.	Foods that have 'high satiety' – such as brown rice, potatoes and wholegrain wheat or rye bread – tell your brain you are full. Also, oxygenate your body with deep nasal breathing to lower the stress hormones that trigger appetite.
'I ATE HEALTHILY ALL DAY, BUT THEN RAIDED THE FRIDGE WHEN I CAME HOME FROM THE PUB.'	Alcohol provides a hefty dose of sugar, which can cause a 'come down' later. Your body then sends you hunger signals to quickly raise sugar levels again. Snack on raw nuts while drinking to keep blood-sugar levels up.	Eating late at night is confusing for your body, which hopes to shut down, rather than deal with an intake of food. This can strain your liver and lead to bloating, nausea or headaches.	Eat before drinking, have quality protein such as chicken and turkey, and plenty of vegetables such as Brussels sprouts. This helps provide nutrients that your liver needs to detox alcohol. Having a decent breakfast will make you less likely to pig out later.
'I GAVE UP SMOKING LAST YEAR, BUT AFTER A FEW DRINKS I SNEAKED A FEW CIGS.'	Smoking reduces levels of vitamin C in the blood, which, ironically, promotes cravings. Twice a day, take two Biocare Vitamin C 500mg, £9.35 for 60 capsules at naturesclock.co.uk . Consider hypnotherapy to address the psychological associations; bsch.org.uk .	You know this already... Cigarettes impair circulation, damage body cells and tissues, are full of toxic metals linked to cancer and heart disease and are very ageing!	When you feel a craving, press the acupuncture point in the middle of your breastbone with your thumb three times, and hold for 12 seconds each time. Carry almonds and sunflower seeds with you to keep cravings at bay.
'JUST TWO HOURS AFTER DINNER, I SCOFFED THE ENTIRE BOX OF QUALITY STREET.'	Winter can be worse for balancing blood sugar, as less sunlight lowers the feel-good brain chemical serotonin, so the brain demands sugar to raise it quickly. Contact the British Association for Nutritional Therapy, 0870 606 1284; bant.org.uk , for help with your cravings.	When we have cravings, we are usually drawn to quick-fix sugary foods that promote vicious cycles of blood-sugar highs and lows. This can lead to fatigue, irritability and low moods.	Try this alternative Christmas sweet treat: plain yoghurt, one teaspoon cinnamon, ground almonds, unsweetened coconut and blueberries. This can satisfy a sweet tooth, help relieve the root cause of the cravings, and make you too full to overdose on chocolate.
'I HAD CHAMPAGNE FOR BREAKFAST, THEN SHARED A BOTTLE OF BAILEYS WITH GRANNY.'	Alcohol is often used as a social lubricant. If its effects become less jolly beyond the festive season, balance blood sugar (as outlined above) to help reduce alcohol cravings. Alternate alcohol with mineral water and lemon juice to limit alcohol consumption, rehydrate and help liver function.	Moderate drinking (14 units a week for women) can be beneficial, though they're best not taken all at once! Too much may lead to blood-sugar problems and diabetes – if you've over-indulged go to SOS.	To support your liver and help it protect you from seasonal excess, take a course of Lamberts Milk Thistle, £9.50 for 90 tablets, and up the dose before you hit the sauce. The homeopathic remedy Nux Vomica, £4.25, can help with a hangover the next morning. Both available at nutricentre.com .

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