

Erin Billups: It's the holiday season, and with it comes loads of yummy treats that most of us are not willing to turn down. As a result, it's commonly accepted that we will put on a little weight over the next few weeks, but you may not have to. Joining me now is Northwell Health endocrinologist Dr. Mashina Sood. She works closely with many of her patients, particularly those with diabetes to keep their weight in check. Welcome, Dr. Sood.

Dr. Sood: Thank you for having me.

Erin Billups: So a lot of the advice that you give your diabetic patients could be spread across denied diabetics, pre-diabetics, what is the most common issue that you see? Especially around the holidays with those trying to keep weight off?

Dr. Sood: You know, being at social activities and falling off the wagon, per se, is a major problem for almost anyone I know during the season. Not just patients with diabetes as you said. So, I really try to give them advice that is relevant to their day-to-day struggles with this issue. I think the most important goal is to define one's goals and to share those weight loss goals or weight maintenance goals with the people around them. Use your family, use your friends, motivate them even, to stay on track, and create a healthful environment around this crazy holiday season.

Erin Billups: So, like a community of accountability, basically.

Dr. Sood: Exactly. There are online support groups if there's no one in your immediate circle who would be supportive of this, but I think knowing your goals going into the season helps you to stay on track with them.

Erin Billups: Well let's just talk a little bit about the dangers of losing weight. Many People are thinking "Hey, January comes around, New Year's resolutions; I'll get rid of it". Some people, there's talk that there's 5 lb weight gain weight gain on average during the holiday seasons. But it's actually closer to a pound, and you might say that's a lot, less but over time, it adds up and we don't lose that weight. What is that doing to the body over time?

Dr. Sood: It has a very negative impact on the body. So a pound won't negatively impacts one's health so much, but five pounds over a few years, 10 lb over 5 or 7 years can really raise someone's body mass index. Once the BMI, or body mass index, reaches a certain threshold; then we start seeing weight complications, like diabetes or pre diabetes or high blood pressure, high cholesterol, risk for stroke or heart disease, risk for kidney dysfunction, or even things that are more bothersome in one's day-to-day life like acid reflux or arthritis.

Erin Billups: So the goal is to not put on any weight then, but, can I not enjoy all these amazing treats around me during the holiday season?

Dr. Sood: You absolutely should. So, if you define your weight loss goals, or weight maintenance goals, share them of the people around you. Maybe even cook your own food most of the time, so you know what goes into food and you make decisions about food most of the time. Then you afford yourself the chance here and there to indulge. I what I tell my patients as they should indulge when it really matters. So, maybe not on those random weeknight in front of the television with an open bag of cookies or chips or popcorn, but at a party with their friends or their family where they're having a treat with people around them and really savoring the experience, and then it's easier to get back on track in a regular day.

Erin Billups: Okay, and how does exercise fit into all this?

Dr. Sood: So, exercise is key. Especially as people get older. Diet is very, very important, you can't do it without dietary maintenance, but exercise can give you that buffer to have an extra treat or two. So I actually tell my patients, and I myself, schedule exercise. So, we aim for at least 150 minutes a week of moderate physical activity, and someone who's already exercising, we try to reach a goal of about 300 minutes a week. So, that comes out to about 30 minutes, 5 days a week, or an hour, fewer times a week, and really scheduling that and keeping yourself accountable to it will really help.

Erin Billups: You don't have to do it all at one time, right?

Dr. Sood: No not at all. If you're aiming for 30 minutes a day and you break it up into 10 minute sessions throughout the day, that counts just as much depending on what you're doing. And you don't need a gym either you know you can get very creative with your home environment or your work environment, maybe go for a walk at lunch. I know winter weather can be a deterrent to being active outside, so if you need advice about that is important to ask your physician, or your friends who are more physically active, about how they do that.

Erin Billups: And you mentioned keeping track of your weight. I mean, some people don't want to be stressed out by weighing themselves on a regular basis, but that could actually be helpful, right?

Dr. Sood: Right. If you have the type of personality that takes on that stress and it interferes with your ability to lose the weight then, you know, don't necessarily measure yourself, or weigh yourself everyday, or every week. But if you can handle that type of information, I really do encourage my patients not only that weigh themselves weekly, but to actually measure themselves. Take a tape measure; measure the circumference of your arm, or your waist, or your thigh; sometimes you can detect differences there, before the pounds actually show up on the scale. Before your clothing size changes, because once your clothing size changes, you've probably gained quite a significant amount that's harder to lose.

Erin Billups: Okay, any last tidbits this holiday season for keeping the weight off?

Dr. Sood: 90/10 rule. 90% of the time, enjoy your healthy food, stay on track with exercise, and 10% of the times indulge in your treats, and make meaning out of it.

Erin Billups: Well that seems fair. Thank you so much, Dr. Sood.