

Yes, You Can Eat 25 Canapés & Fit Into Your Jeans

Take a cue from Team GB – small changes can yield big results and help you avoid the New Year bulge

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GREAT BRITAIN'S glittering medal tally at last summer's Olympics was the stuff of dreams – and speculation. As our cycling team pedalled themselves to a staggering 14 medals, the French wondered grudgingly if our success was down to having 'magic wheels'. The truth was less mysterious. Performance director David Brailsford revealed that the secret to the cyclists' phenomenal medal haul lay in 'marginal gains' – the big successes that can come from taking lots of tiny steps consistently over a set period.

What's that got to do with us? Quite a lot, actually. The average person puts on half a stone at this time of year. But during the celebrations the last thing any of us want to do is make massive changes to our oversubscribed lives, like hour-long runs or cutting out food groups. We want to party, dance, drink, eat and generally indulge – without the scales creeping up.

First, the bad news: it takes 3,500 calories to make 1lb of fat, which means

that by overeating an average of just 200 calories a day, you could put on a few pounds in only four weeks. But the upside is that you can use the marginal gains theory to make tiny changes in your activity levels – more dancing, a little extra walking, a few dishes washed, a bit of vacuuming (not much) – and barely perceptible food and drink swaps. Done all month, these small changes will add up to ensure you don't gain weight and may even lose some.

As sports scientist Kirstie Tew explains, 'Cutting 120 calories from your day with a half-hour walk can add up to 1lb lost in four weeks. And just

walking around while you're on the phone at work could triple the amount of calories you burn.'

To build your marginal gains strategy, *Marie Claire* has enlisted the help of Tew and her team to calculate the gram-by-gram, calorie-by-calorie effects of small changes you can make

during the festive season to ensure you can eat, drink and be merry without going up a dress size. *{continued}*

“Marginal gains will add up to ensure you don't gain weight”



HOW TO MAKE MARGINAL GAINS

Try fitting these activities into your schedule every week for four weeks during the festive season

GO OUT AND SHOP FOR TWO HOURS instead of buying your presents online. **Calories burned:** 120 (480 over four weeks).

WRAP YOUR PRESENTS for one hour. **Calories burned:** 22.5 (90 over four weeks).

HOOVER UP THE NEEDLES under the tree – and the rest of the house while you're at it – for 30 minutes. **Calories burned:** 130 (520 over four weeks).

WASH AND DRY the dishes every day instead of filling the dishwasher. **Calories burned:** 93 (372 over four weeks)

PEEL AND CHOP vegetables for one meal a day instead of buying them prepared. **Calories burned:** 73 (292 over four weeks).

WHIP THE CREAM by hand three times over the fortnight instead of buying it ready whipped. **Calories burned:** 48 (192 over four weeks).

DANCE FOR AN HOUR at a Christmas party. **Calories burned:** 1,050 (4,200 over four weeks).

WALK FOR 30 MINUTES on five days. **Calories burned:** 581 (2,324 over four weeks).

WALK AROUND while on the phone for 30 minutes every day. **Calories burned:** 232 (928 over four weeks).

SWAP ONE DAILY full-size chocolate bar for a small advent-calendar chocolate. **Calories saved:** 1,689 (6,756 over four weeks).

CELEBRATE WITH four glasses of Champagne on Christmas day instead of mulled wine. **Calories saved:** 396.

TOTAL LOSS IN FOUR WEEKS:
(if you do all of the above)

Nearly 5lb

WANT AN EVEN BIGGER ADVANTAGE?

These secret weapons can help keep your small lifestyle changes on track and may even boost your gain

Get an activity monitor

Forget pedometers, which merely measure steps; the latest in serious fat-burn gadgetry is accelerometers. These measure the total sum of *all* your movement – not only steps – to get an accurate picture of your energy burn.

The Rolls-Royce of this technology is the Ki Fit System: an armband worn day and night that's the most accurate movement monitor on the market. It measures activity, calories burned and consumed, steps taken and even sleep quality.

The information is then stored in your own personal monitoring system online, so you can track your progress down to the last

calorie. Users report being surprised at how many calories are consumed by everyday activities such as washing up or walking from the bus stop.

At an initial cost of £99.99, plus 11 monthly payments of £16.50 for a year's subscription, it's pricey, but worth it (kiperformance.co.uk).

Keep a food log

A recent year-long study found that it's possible to lose up to 19lb in a year simply by writing down what you eat and making no other changes. 'Logging food changes people's behaviour,' says Dr Tew. 'Even before they have logged what they have eaten, knowing they have to write it down makes them think twice about binges and seconds.' Our favourite – and the easiest – way to do it is by using the MyNetDiary iPad app (£2.49 from iTunes).

Turn down your thermostat

The lower the temperature, the higher your metabolic rate, says Tom Barber, associate professor in clinical endocrinology and diabetes at the University of Warwick. 'If you turn down the thermostat in your house by a few degrees, say from 21 to 18, in theory you could increase your metabolic rate and could, over time, lose weight.' Does putting on a jumper negate the effects? No, he says, because parts of the body are still not covered by the jumper, such as the head, which accounts for around 20 per cent of heat lost from the body. You would still be expending more energy than if the thermostat was up. Cheaper bills, too. Result.

Spice up your meals

If your dinner makes you sweat, that is proof of its 'thermogenic' (which literally means 'heat-creating') effect on your metabolism. In one study

involving Thai women, chillies were found to increase metabolic rate immediately by 20 per cent and sustain it for up to 30 minutes.

But it's not just chilli and cayenne

pepper that can pump up your metabolism after eating. More recently, cinnamon, ginger, mustard, horseradish and turmeric have all been found to have a similar thermogenic effect – literally switching on your body's heat-production systems, boosting your metabolism while you eat them and afterwards, too.

For a metabolic kick-start first thing, grate a little fresh ginger into a pint of warm water, add a pinch of cinnamon and cayenne as well as the juice of half a lemon (this acts like 'dishwashing liquid' on your liver, and is great if you have been overindulging on the alcohol front) and consume before breakfast. ■

“Turn down the thermostat in your house to increase your metabolic rate”