

THROUGH THICK & THIN

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Calories aren't contagious, but pudge-promoting behaviors and body-size ideals can be. If your waistline is widening along with those in your social circle, check out what our experts have to say about how to scale back when faced with these six situations.

#1

CHALLENGE: NEWLYWED COUPLE PACKING ON THE POUNDS

Hubby getting chubby? Watch out! A study of 12,000 adults suggests you're 37 percent more likely to pack on extra pounds if your spouse does. "Nagging or shooting the evil eye when your spouse reaches for a cookie won't help," says Lynn O'Hara, RD, LPC, of Bay Head, New Jersey. "Instead, set goals—individually or as a couple—and communicate with your spouse about how to be supportive." For example, aim to eat at home more often and strategize how to make that happen, such as planning meals for the week together.

#2

CHALLENGE: EATING RIGHT DESPITE YOUR FAMILY'S TIME-CRUNCHED SCHEDULE

"Fueling your body should be one of the most important things you do in your day—not an afterthought," says Michelle May, M.D., author of *Eat What You Love, Love What You Eat*. Avoid mindlessly gobbling high-calorie, fast-food meals in the car. Plan ahead, use time-savers, and eat as a family as often as possible, May says. "For example, Dad may pick up a prerossed chicken at the store, which can be served with microwaved vegetables one night, then use the leftovers to make sandwiches to eat before soccer practice the next night."

#3

CHALLENGE: WATCHING YOUR CALORIES WHILE FEEDING PICKY CHILDREN

You don't have to cook twice to meet everyone's needs. Instead, think of dishes in layers, says Susan Albers, Psy.D., of the Cleveland Clinic. "For example, if you're making pasta, add extra vegetables to your serving while adding a layer of calcium-rich cheese to the kids' servings," Albers says. "Continue to add or remove sauces, vegetables, and other layers depending on individual needs." Involve the kids, too. Let them choose from healthful toppings for personal pizzas, baked potatoes, wraps, yogurt, and more.



#4

CHALLENGE: STICKING TO A CALORIE BUDGET AT FAMILY GET-TOGETHERS

Passing up Grandma's special pecan pie may seem insensitive. "Many of my clients worry about hurting others' feelings because they're afraid they won't be loved," O'Hara says. "But everyone should be able to set reasonable boundaries and decline food in a nice way." At the same time, no food is necessarily off-limits when watching your weight. "Find ways to enjoy small portions of favorite dishes, such as getting enough exercise and avoiding arriving overly hungry to the event." Everyone wins when you find tasty, healthful ways to make over traditional family recipes, too.

#5

CHALLENGE: LOSING WEIGHT WHILE FRIENDS EAT ANYTHING THEY WANT

Keep your eyes on your own plate. "Avoid comparing your eating to those who aren't trying to lose weight or keep it off—your eating will naturally be different," says Judith S. Beck, Ph.D., author of *The Beck Diet Solution*. "And remind yourself why you're trying to eat better and lose weight." Share your goals with your friends, and let them know how they can be supportive rather than enabling you to make poor choices. When possible, meet friends for activity-filled outings, such as ice skating or bowling.

#6

CHALLENGE: MODELING HEALTHFUL BEHAVIORS FOR YOUR KIDS

Children are continually learning from parents. If you belittle yourself with comments such as "my fat butt," that can lead to body image concerns in your kids, May says. Instead, say you're choosing to eat healthier so you'll feel better. Avoid referring to eating certain foods, such as chocolate, as a weakness. Similarly, don't refer to exercise as punishment. A better message is, "I choose to do Zumba because it's so much fun."

**YOUR CHANCE
OF BECOMING
OBESE
INCREASES BY...**

57%
IF A FRIEND
BECOMES OBESE

40%
IF A SIBLING
BECOMES OBESE

37%
IF YOUR SPOUSE
BECOMES OBESE

SOURCE: "The Spread of Obesity in a Large Social Network over 32 Years," *New England Journal of Medicine*, 2007.