Counting Christmas calories? No need to panic!

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At this time of year newspaper articles will warn of over-indulgence on Christmas day. Experts from the University of Birmingham School of Sport and Exercise Sciences say there is too much focus on the calories consumed during just this one day of the year.

They say that although a traditional Christmas dinner might average 1000 calories (a total daily average on Christmas day is around 3500-4500 kcal) people shouldn't get too hung-up about the calories in their Christmas dinner. Equally as important are the less obvious calories in alcohol and grazing over the festive period, which substantially contribute to excessive calorie intake. With festive treats a plenty over the holiday season we must be mindful of how quickly the calorie count can increase above the usual level. There are approximately 100 calories in a glass of champagne, for example, and 132 calories in three Quality Street sweets!

Dr Andrew Blannin, an expert in exercise metabolism from the University of Birmingham, said 'people shouldn't worry too much about one day of the year – Christmas is a time to relax and enjoy yourself. In fact, gradual weight gain over our adult years is mainly due to small daily energy imbalances, which are individually trivial, but when they accumulate over months and years cause us to very gradually gain weight.

'After Christmas is the time to reflect on calories consumed and energy expenditure. Most studies show dieting is more beneficial in the short-term, while exercise is better as a long-term strategy. Regular walking is as good as any, and as a general rule of thumb, you expend approximately 100kcal per mile covered.'

Notes to editors

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