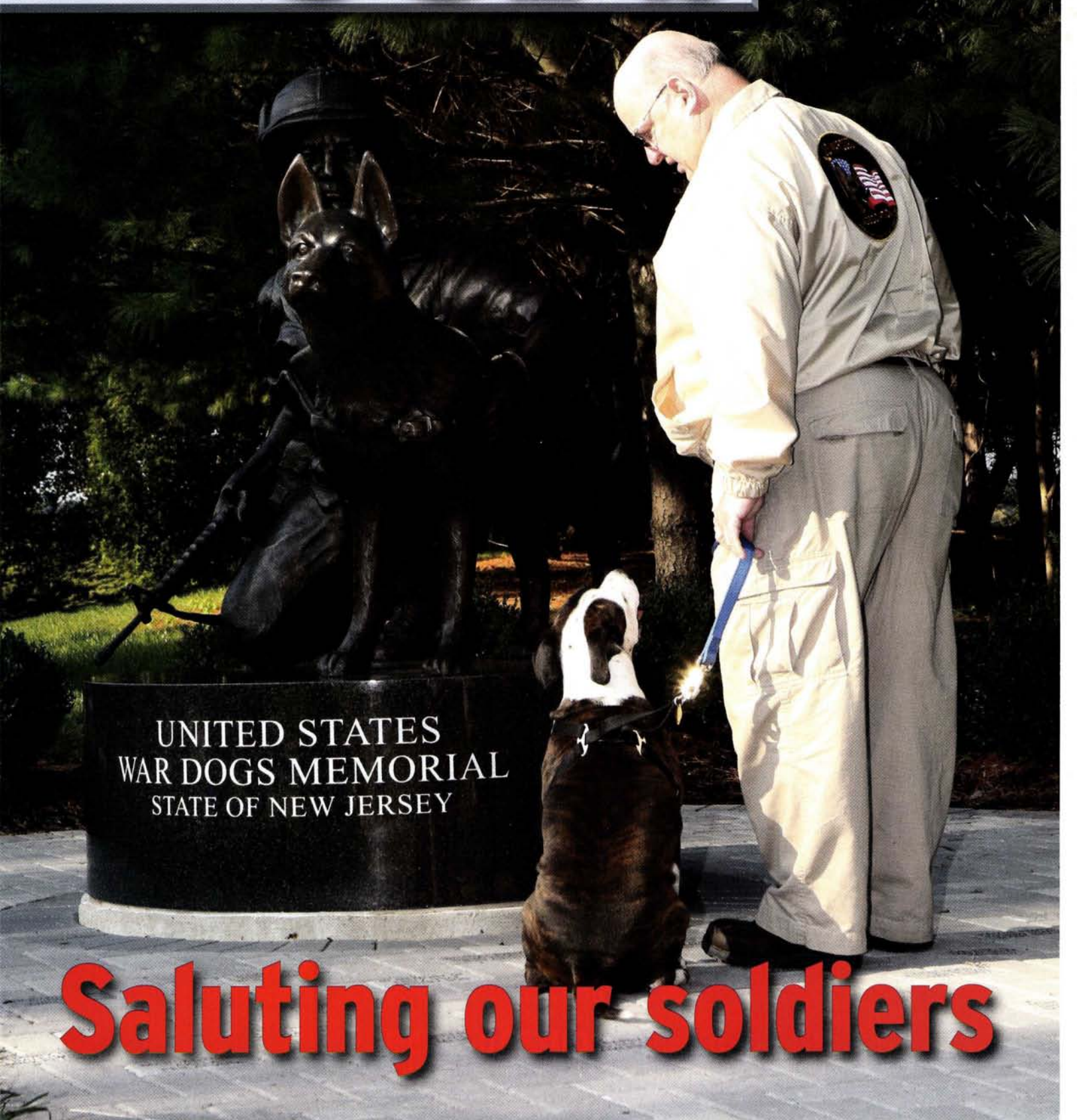


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# Healthy hints for holidays

■ BY MATT BRZYCKI

For those of you who are watching your weight, the period from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day can be treacherous. Indeed, it comes as no surprise that one of the top New Year's resolutions is to lose weight.



Matt Brzycki

How much weight does the average person gain during the holidays? In one study, researchers investigated the weight change of 38 subjects during a 10-week period starting with the two weeks before Thanksgiving and ending with the two weeks after New Year's Day. Three holiday weeks (Thanksgiving, Christmas/Hanukkah and New Year's Eve) were compared to the other seven non-holiday weeks. The subjects gained – no typo – 500 percent more weight during the holiday weeks than during the non-holiday weeks.

## WHAT TO DO

It takes a great deal of effort and control to get through the holidays unscathed. Here are some hints that you should find helpful:

**1. Eat a small meal a few hours prior to a large dinner.** For the most part, holidays are punctuated with late-day feasts. It's important for you to have a little bit of food earlier in the day but not too much. One of the worst things that you can do is to skip a meal. If you starve yourself, you'll be ravenous and the next time that you eat, you'll probably satisfy your appetite by consuming anything that doesn't move. In spreading calories throughout the day, you're better able to keep your hunger at bay.

**2. Sit away from the serving area.** When sitting near the serving area, food is readily available and easily accessible. It doesn't require much effort for you to reach across the table to grab second (or third) helpings. And don't forget something else about sitting away from food: Out of sight, out of mind, out of mouth.

**3. Avoid doing activities while eating.** Certain activities are associated with eating. This includes watching television and socializing. When engaged in these activities (and others), people are distracted and tend to eat more. This is because they focus on what they're doing rather than what they're eating.

To keep from doing this, confine your eating to a designated place or room (and not in front of something with a screen).

**4. Eat soup and/or salad at the start of a meal.** Because they're comprised of mostly water, soups and salads can provide relatively few calories but give you a feeling of satiety. If you lead off with soup and/or a salad, then, you're less likely to consume as many calories during the remainder of your meal.



**5. Drink more water.** It's a wise move for you to drink plenty of water before, during and after meals. Remember, water has weight but no calories. Therefore, drinking water creates a feeling of satiety (fullness) without adding anything to your "caloric budget."

**6. Decrease the size of your portions.** This is fairly easy to do: Simply use smaller plates and bowls for foods and smaller glasses/cups for beverages. Essentially, employing these items helps you to limit the size of portions and, as a result, lower the number of calories that you consume. And it certainly makes sense that if you decide to eat an entire bowl of potato chips, for example, a smaller bowl would yield fewer calories than a larger bowl. Along these lines, people tend to pour more fluids into short, wide glasses than tall, narrow ones. The message here is to use tall, narrow glasses.

**7. Chew your food slowly.** When you chew slowly, you're less likely to mindlessly inhale food as if you're the defending champion in an eating contest. The fact of the matter is that by chewing your food slowly, your brain is given adequate time to receive a signal from your stomach that it's full. To help slow down, place your fork or spoon on the table between bites.

**8. Watch desserts and snacks.** A food that's loaded with calories, sugar and fat without much in the way of nutrients isn't necessarily bad as long as it's consumed in moderation. In other words, something like ice cream or cookies is generally okay provided that you don't eat massive quantities. If you're looking for healthy snacks, try fruit, raw vegetables, low-fat yogurt, popcorn (sans butter), whole-grain crackers, pretzels or cereal.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

When you hunker down to watch the Eagles beat the Cards on Thanksgiving, be mindful of the potential pitfalls that can occur so that you don't pack on the pounds. ♥

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