

HealthWorks Presents the Healthy Holiday Challenge

Contributed by Erin Parsons
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OXFORD, Miss.

- Thanks to tempting holiday meals, many Americans gain weight from Thanksgiving through New Year's, with some studies showing an average gain of seven pounds.

To help its faculty and staff avoid the "seasonal seven" this year, the University of Mississippi has developed a HealthWorks program to encourage healthy eating and exercise habits.

The Healthy Holiday Challenge is a program designed to help competing teams maintain their weight over the holiday season. Members who volunteer for the challenge will weigh in Friday (Nov. 21) at the Turner Center and then again on Jan. 6. The team whose members gain the least weight overall wins the competition.

To sign up for the challenge, team organizers should e-mail their team information to Molly Brown, Human Resources program coordinator, at mkbrown@olemiss.edu. Teams can vary in number of members and are encouraged to come up with a clever team name.

HealthWorks is a program designed to motivate members of the Ole Miss community to adopt healthy lifestyles through a comprehensive health program that encompasses awareness, education and preventative services. HealthWorks members came up with the challenge idea to motivate UM employees to resist giving in to holiday temptations.

"Many people's biggest complaint about the holidays is that they overeat, and they come back from Christmas break overweight," Brown said. "The challenge was really just our way of coming up with something for the faculty and staff to do while they're away from school to keep the health topic in their mind - and first and foremost have a healthier holiday season."

A related brown bag seminar, titled "Healthy Eating over the Holiday Season," is scheduled for 12:15 p.m. Thursday in the Student Union, Room 404A-B. Kathy Knight, associate professor of family and consumer sciences, will present the program. Attendance is not mandatory to enter the competition but is highly recommended, according to Knight.

"The goal of the seminar is to inform the participants about healthy options for holiday meals and to help participants monitor the rest of their diet," Knight said. "Every meal is not a holiday meal, so if we keep the rest of the meals healthy, then we're doing well."

Brown hopes that many teams will sign up for the challenge. "We just want people to have fun and work towards the ultimate goal of being healthy," she said. "I think that this will be a very enjoyable way to do that, and a way to get your co-workers to rally together behind something."

"The holidays are always a challenging time for us as we look at our weight," Knight said. "This year, let's be proactive in doing something good for our health, so that come January, we aren't going to say, 'Wow, I need to lose all that weight I gained over the holidays.' Let's do something to prevent it from coming on in the first place."

For more information, call 662-915-5540.

