Although the most common New Year's resolution is to eat healthier and lose weight, consumers tend to continue purchasing less-healthy foods while also adding more healthy foods to the diet. The additional calories result in small weight gains at the beginning of the year despite resolutions to lose weight.

Weight gain common during first months of the year despite New Year's resolutions

Essentials of Health

Small yearly weight gains of one to two pounds may be a significant contributor to the high rate of obesity in America, and weight gain over the holiday period may be responsible for much of this yearly weight gain. A study published in *PLOS ONE* shows that despite people's best intentions to eat less in the New Year, they may actually be taking in more calories during the first three months of the year

Over the course of 37 weeks, from July 17, 2010 to March 12, 2011, researchers recruited 207 households to participate in a randomized-controlled trial conducted at two regional-grocery chain locations in upstate New York. Daily-itemized transaction level data were collected for each of the households and a nutrient-rating system was used to designate "healthy" and "less healthy" items. Expenditures and calories purchased for the holiday period (Thanksgiving–New Year's), and the post-holiday period (New Year's–March), were compared to baseline (July–Thanksgiving) amounts.

Household food expenditures increased by 15% over the holiday season compared to baseline, and 75% of the additional expenditures were considered "less-healthy" items. Sales of healthy food items increased 29.4% after the holiday season, consistent with what would be expected based on New Year's resolutions. Unfortunately, households spent about the same on the less-healthy items in the post-holiday season as they did during the holiday season. After the holidays, calories purchased each week increased by 9.3% (calories per serving/week) compared to the holidays and by 20.2% compared to baseline.

Despite resolutions to eat more healthfully after New Year's and the greater focus on healthier items post-New Year's Day, the current study found that not only was there an increase in the purchase of unhealthy items during the holidays, but it remained elevated in the weeks immediately following the holiday season. So, even though many people make a New Year's resolution to eat healthier or lose weight, consumers are making purchasing decisions that only partly support these goals. Healthcare professionals should encourage consumers to substitute healthy items for less-healthy foods to assist consumers in fulfilling their New Year's resolutions to reverse holiday weight gain.

Pope L, Hanks AS, Just DR, Wansink B (2014) New Year's Res-Illusions: Food Shopping in the New Year Competes with Healthy Intentions. PLoS ONE 9(12): e110561. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0110561