



Let's get real. It's almost impossible not to add blubber while at sea. After all, don't most seniors book cruise vacations primarily because never-ending food service is part of the all-inclusive price?

Who can resist the sumptuous breakfast, the mid-morning snack, the enormous lunchtime buffet, the afternoon pizza break, the big sit-down dinner and the midnight chocoholic celebration? Statistics report that passengers each add an average of ten pounds per one-week cruise.

Of course, it is possible to avoid gaining weight. Ben Hur did it when he was sentenced to pull oars on a Roman cruise. He ate just one small bowl of grain a day, although not by choice. However, you can keep from gaining weight without giving up the cruise pleasures. Just modify the never-ending food offerings. Don't give in to the temptations, ignore calorie count and stray too far from your normal eating habits. Some suggestions:

For breakfast, dine on fruit, a bowl of hot or cold cereal with skim milk and cup of tea or coffee. A boiled egg is OK, but stay away from highly-buttered scrambled and fried eggs, bacon, ham, potatoes. Also try to ignore all those tempting displays of breads and pastry.

Throughout the morning, while at the pool and spa, you'll be tempted by servers offering more pastry, chips, soft drinks and booze. Just say no, and instead have a diet soda or fruit juice. Your biggest temptation will happen at noon. Cruise ships are famous for enormous lunch buffets.

No matter how attractive the buffet display, confine your lunch to raw veggies and fruits, salads with minimum dressings and clear soups. Add a modest helping of lightly-seasoned cold or hot chicken and/or fish dishes.

Although many other diners go back to the buffet spreads for second and third helpings, don't even think about it. For dessert, try a fresh fruit dish or sorbet. Skip the mid-afternoon pizza, chips and special sugar-loaded and alcoholic drinks that are served around the pool.

Dinners on cruises can be dress-up affairs, but that's no reason to overindulge. As at breakfast and lunch, keep it light. For diet-conscious passengers, the menu usually offers veggie, fish and chicken dishes that are low in calories. Stay away from fried foods, as well as pasta, buttered potatoes and other heavy starches. For dessert, stick with the raw fruit or sorbet.

Another necessity to keep from gaining weight on your cruise is to get plenty of exercise before breakfast and between meals. Use the ship's pool, spa, upper-deck jogging track and gym to get at least an hour's workout daily.

If your ship offers organized exercise classes, join in and sweat away the extra calories. Additionally, nothing's more invigorating and enjoyable than strolling the deck at midnight with that special someone who's also trying to avoid gaining weight. Whatever you two do after the midnight stroll could be just that much more healthy exercise.