

Healthy Holiday Eating

The holidays are upon us, bringing with them an onslaught of tantalizing holiday treats. Many of these holiday goodies pose a direct challenge to the healthy eating plan that you have tried to adhere to for the last eleven months. Whether you are at home, a friend's house or at the office holiday party, the temptation to overeat is lurking at nearly every table you pass.

It is commonly believed that the average American will gain five to seven pounds during the holidays. According to recent research by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), however, the average weight gain is approximately one pound. While this may strike some as being good news, this doesn't mean that you can eat that pecan pie all by yourself. The problem with even minimal weight gain is that many people are not shedding this excess weight after the holidays, and those extra pounds are adding up over time.

Many traditional holiday foods are loaded with fat and calories. This doesn't mean that all of your favorite foods are off limits, however. Look instead for ways to make them healthier, by trimming some of their fat and calories. Experts say individuals can enjoy the tempting food offerings while dining and at parties, by following these simple guidelines:

Remember there are no bad foods, just bad portions. All foods can fit in moderation, just keep an eye on your portion sizes, and balance high and low fat options

Taste, bite, and throw out the rest of the more fattening foods.

Do not go to a party overly hungry.

Share an entrée with your dining companion, and have your own salad and soup.



Take the bread basket off the table.

Prepare eggnog made with reduced fat or skim milk.

Keep your physical activity up. Go for a 20 to 40 minute brisk walk after a meal.

At a buffet, cruise up and down the line, pre-planning your eating.

Never skip a meal to conserve calories.

Limit or avoid high calorie beverages.

One cup of eggnog has the same calories as a piece of apple pie.

Drink plenty of water.

Savor and enjoy food. Use the twenty-minute rule.

Be realistic. Strive to maintain your weight over the holidays.



When you are preparing holiday meals, here are some ways to trim the calories and fat:

Cut the fat and calories in gravy by passing it through a skimmer before serving.

Eat skinless white-meat turkey instead of dark meat.

Cook the stuffing outside the turkey. It contains fewer calories and fat than stuffing cooked inside the bird and reduces the risk of bacteria contamination.

Serve some items that are very low in calories and fat, such as a fresh fruit salad or steamed vegetables topped with lemon juice and herbs.

Substitute baked potatoes instead of candied yams.

Top vegetables with light margarine or reduced-fat sour cream instead of butter.

Serve an apple pie topped with fat free frozen yogurt instead of pecan pie.

If you will be eating sandwiches, use mustard instead of mayonnaise.

Serve pretzels and low-fat snack mixes instead of potato chips.

When choosing holiday foods remember to stay within recommended serving sizes:

SERVING	SIZE
3 ounces of meat	Deck of cards
1 cup fruit or yogurt	Baseball
½ cup veg. or fruit or pasta	Tennis Ball
1 medium potato	Computer mouse
1 tsp. butter	Thumb tip

adapted from the American Dietetics Association

The holidays are a season of the celebration of family, friends, and for many of us, food. If you are trying to avoid gaining excess weight during the holidays, try these simple suggestions. Who knows? This could be the year that you don't have to make a New Year's resolution to drop those extra holiday pounds!



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