



Healthy Eating During the Holidays

The holiday season presents so many tasty temptations that even the most disciplined people have a hard time saying "no." For most of us, the holiday season begins in mid-November and ends in January giving us eight weeks to overindulge. What's more, weight gained during this season tends to stay with us. But, with knowledge about good nutrition, it is possible to eat healthy and still have fun.

Whether attending a company party, planning a dinner party or going out for a New Year's Eve celebration, here are tips to help you enjoy the holidays and avoid undesired weight gain.

Party Tips:

- Never go to a party hungry. Eat a low-fat snack before you go.
- Limit alcohol calories, which are stored as fat.
- Choose diet sodas, club sodas or water so you don't waste calories on beverages.
- Exercise before eating. A brisk 30-minute walk can reduce your appetite as well as burn calories.
- Use small plates and take small portions.
- Choose mostly fruits and vegetables, then add some of your favorite foods as a treat.
- Use salad dressing sparingly. Avoid soups and breads.
- Enjoy your favorite dessert, but watch your portion and don't go back for seconds.
- When socializing, move away from the buffet table.

Cooking and Preparing Holiday Foods:

- Use nonstick cooking sprays.
- Choose lower fat meats like turkey breast, lean ham and filets.
- Prepare stuffing outside of the turkey.
- Use a gravy separator to de-fat gravy.
- Use skim milk and low-fat cheeses.
- Flavor with lots of herbs and spices.
- Use two egg whites rather than a whole egg in recipes.
- Serve angel food cake with light whipped topping and fruits.
- Test low-fat versions of recipes a few days before to be sure they taste good.

Cooking and Preparing Holiday Foods:

- Expect to overeat somewhat, and cut back on eating the day before or day after.
- Take it easy with hors d'oeuvres when a full course meal will be served.
- Grilled or broiled fish are your best bets for entrees.
- Take a second helping of salads or vegetables if you are still hungry.
- Listen to your stomach and stop eating when full.
- If you can, skip dessert or share with your date.

The most practical tip is to not attempt to lose weight during the holidays. This is an unrealistic goal that will set you up for failure and add to the stress of the holiday season. Since most people gain weight during the holidays, you will do well to maintain your weight.

Many holiday and family traditions revolve around foods that make the season special. Limiting high-fat foods, maintaining a healthy diet and getting regular exercise year round will fend off significant permanent weight gain from holiday festivities.

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