

Nutrition Questions?

Ask the Dietitian

—Healthy Eating During the Holidays

Q: What can I do to maintain healthy eating habits over the holiday season?

A: Great question! The holiday season can be a challenging time of year to make healthy choices. According to the National Institutes of Health, the average American gains an extra pound or two every holiday season. This weight can really add up, as the extra holiday pounds tend not to disappear as soon as the ornaments come down.

However, the holidays don't have to result in weight changes. By focusing on finding a balance between food, activity, and fun, you can easily enjoy a healthful holiday celebration! Consider the following tips to help you become mindful about holiday eating. →

Created by Jamie Fisher & Morgan Myrick

2013-2014 Dietetic Interns, The Dietetic Internship Program at Vanderbilt

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Strive to stay the same!

Trying to lose weight during the holidays is often a self-defeating goal. Rather than attempting to shed a few extra pounds, strive to maintain your normal weight.

Don't skip meals!

It's important to avoid the temptation to skip meals during the holiday season. Eating breakfast is especially important, as research shows that those who eat breakfast consume fewer calories throughout the day. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics recommends beginning your day with a small meal that includes whole grains, fruit, low-fat or fat-free dairy, and protein to jumpstart your healthy holiday celebrations. For example, try making yourself a bowl of nutritious Banana Nut Oatmeal! Combine $\frac{1}{2}$ cup old-fashioned oats with 1 cup of skim milk. Microwave for three minutes and then stir in bite-size pieces of banana and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup slivered almonds. Enjoy!

Strategize a plan!

When you first arrive to a holiday gathering, survey the festive food selection. Carefully choose between foods you will eat, those you will sample, and those you will skip. Stay committed to your plan, and don't be in a rush to eat. Relax. Socialize and settle into your environment before you head to the buffet table.

Rethink what you drink!

Alcohol can lessen inhibitions and may induce overeating. If you plan drink alcohol, start with a calorie-free, non-alcoholic beverage to satisfy your thirst. Try sipping on ice water with a slice of lemon, or a glass of unsweetened tea! Remember, moderate alcohol consumption is defined as up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks for men.

Consider Substitutions!

By simply substituting a few ingredients in your favorite holiday recipes, you can drastically reduce fat and calories without sacrificing taste! Try using low-sodium, fat-free chicken broth in your mashed potatoes to add succulent flavor and reduce the amount of added butter or margarine.

If you stay mindful and optimistic with your holiday eating, you too will successfully 'beat holiday bulge' while still enjoying all that the season has to offer!

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