



the right choice
for a healthier you

Happy Healthy Holidays

December is a month of celebration for many. From Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa, to celebrating the end of the calendar year, there are parties and special meals galore. Contrary to popular belief, you can enjoy special holiday foods and treats without destroying your waistline and healthy routines. One study, published by the New England Journal of Medicine, showed the average holiday weight gain for adults was .37 kilograms, or just under a pound; more than half the people in the study stayed within two pounds of their normal (pre-holiday) weight.

One key to enjoying the best of the holidays and maintaining a healthy lifestyle lies in managing portions and enjoying foods in moderation. We've assembled a few additional tips below to help you have a healthy, delicious holiday season!



AVOID SKIPPING MEALS OR OVEREATING

Making room for a big holiday meal by fasting all day can backfire and cause you to overeat later. Avoid this common pitfall by having a balanced breakfast and a light lunch. And, if you DO overindulge, don't fall victim to the "I've blown it so I might as well just eat everything I want" mentality. Just because you overdo it at one meal, doesn't mean you have derailed your eating habits for the entire holiday.

IT'S ALL IN YOUR MIND

Use smaller plates and practice portion control to help prevent over-eating; you should feel satisfied but not stuffed at meals.



AVOID GRAZING

A few bites here and there between meals or while cooking can add up quickly—as much as 500 extra calories per day, which translates to one pound of weight gain per week!



PACE YOURSELF

Take your time eating and savor each bite. By slowing down, you give your stomach the time it needs to process your food and send the signals to your brain that you are satisfied.



HEALTHY HOLIDAY SWAPS



Eggnog and other holiday drinks—even non-alcoholic options—can be high in sugar, fat, and calories. With so many additional holiday delights to try, why waste all your calories on drinks? Instead, limit yourself to 1-2 glasses, then switch to water. You can also modify your favorite holiday recipes by using these ingredient swaps to make them a little healthier:



Applesauce instead of oil, butter, or margarine in baking recipes



Broth-based soups instead of cream-based soups



Greek yogurt instead of sour cream or mayonnaise



Choose fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt, and cheese



GET YOUR EXERCISE IN

According to health.gov, adults need 2 ½ hours of moderate-intensity physical activity each week, with muscle-strengthening activities on two days. This can be challenging during the holidays when you have additional events slotted into your calendar and shopping and preparation to do. Take advantage of opportunities to get extra exercise in while shopping and running errands. Start by taking the stairs instead of elevators or escalators; park at the (far) end of the parking lot, and consider making an extra lap of the lot on your way back to the car. You can also add a family walk through the neighborhood or a nearby park after dinner; it's a great way to spend family time together while also getting everyone moving.

Sources:

Cornell Cooperative Extension, Health.gov, New England Journal of Medicine, University of Utah Health