

Healthy Eating During the Holiday Season



It can be difficult to eat healthy during the holiday season. It may seem like November hits and suddenly the pounds start to pack on. But it doesn't have to be that way. With a little preparation and discipline, you can enjoy the holiday season and still keep your eating under control.

Many people think its okay to gain a little weight during the holidays, and just take it off after the holidays are over. But weight can be hard to get off – especially as you get older. Plus, the cycle of gaining and losing weight isn't healthy for your body. Instead, a good goal may be to try to maintain your current weight throughout the holiday season.

The biggest challenge for most people with eating healthy during the holidays is the large dinners. With all the high-fat and high-calorie foods, it's easy to see how healthy eating can get away from you. Here are some tips for how to keep the feasting under control:

- *Focus on eating a large variety of food – not a large amount.* Eating different kinds of food can help you get a variety of nutrients. Be sure to watch your portion sizes, though. Eating too much of several different foods is still eating too much.¹
- *Don't skip meals.* You're more likely to eat too much when you're really hungry. You may think its okay to miss a meal or two and then eat all you want in one meal, but it's much healthier to eat three moderately-sized meals a day.
- *Resist temptation.* With so many delicious foods available, it can be difficult to say no. But cravings go away quickly. Finding a way to distract yourself may help you resist the urge to snack on unhealthy foods.
- *Pace yourself.* The quicker you eat, the more you may end up eating. Take time to really taste and savor your food. Not only can this help keep your portions under control, but it can also help with digestion.
- *Watch your alcohol intake.* Alcohol is loaded with calories. Mixed drinks can be especially high in calories. Don't overlook the affect the beverages you drink can have on your calorie intake.

Holiday meals aren't the only challenges for healthy eating during the holiday season. Healthy eating habits can easily get lost in the chaotic schedules, shopping, family celebrations, and traveling. Here are a few suggestions on how to eat healthy during the hustle and bustle:

- *Exercise.* Although the holidays can get hectic, following an exercise plan is important to your health. It can help burn the extra calories of those holiday meals, and can reduce the stress that sometimes comes along with the holiday season.¹
- *Plan and prepare meals in advance.* Holidays can interfere with your usual meal plans. Try making meals ahead of time and freezing them for when you're short on time.
- *Bring healthy food with you when traveling.* It may require extra planning and willpower, or not always choosing the most convenient option. However, it can prevent you from straying from eating healthfully when you're away from home.

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Eating healthy during the holiday season doesn't mean you have to give up all those traditional foods you enjoy. Some indulgences can be okay as long as you enjoy them in moderation. The holidays are a time to enjoy – so why not enjoy them in a healthy way?

References:

Casey, John. (2004). *Healthy Holiday Eating: Ten Tips*. Retrieved August 20, 2008 from: <http://www.webmd.com/content/article/53/61351.htm>

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