



Healthy Holiday Eating

The holiday season can be a challenge even for people with the healthiest eating habits. The sweets at school or work, the parties with tables loaded with food, and having even less time to exercise because of shopping and all the other holiday demands can really pack on the pounds. Here are some tips to help you eat healthier without sacrificing enjoyment, and how to recover the day after.

- Hors d'oeuvres like cheese and crackers, spinach dip, nuts, and fried foods are nutritional disasters. They are loaded with fat and calories, even in small amounts. Instead, choose raw veggies (avoid the creamy dressing), steamed shrimp, or other grilled meats or sea food.



- Watch your portion sizes. Choose the smallest plate available and take just a small amount of different kinds of foods. That way you get to enjoy a variety of foods and nutrients. Besides, seeing lots of food on a small plate, versus a moderate amount of food on a large plate, can make a big emotional and mental difference.

and lower your inhibitions so that your healthy eating plans go out the window. In addition, alcohol is loaded with empty calories and wreaks havoc on your blood sugar. This is especially important if you are prone to the holiday blues. A glass of wine, wine spritzer, or a bottle of light beer are your best choices.

- Choose white meat turkey and don't eat the skin. This choice by itself will save you 58 calories and about 7 grams of fat per 4 ounce serving. Also, use a minimal amount of gravy because it may be loaded with fat (most of that "juice" from the turkey tends to be fat).

- Choose either sweet potatoes or mashed white potatoes or stuffing, but not all of them (2 at most!). Sweet potatoes are your best choice, because they have a good amount of fiber and beta carotene.

- If you're the one doing the cooking: whip mashed potatoes with buttermilk instead of butter and milk; use light margarine and/or herbs instead of butter to season vegetables; use a gravy separator to remove fat from drippings; cook your stuffing in a casserole dish instead of inside the turkey so it doesn't soak in the turkey fat; and use whole grain or wheat bread in your stuffing instead of white.

- Pumpkin is actually pretty healthy since it has fiber and beta carotene. However, a pumpkin pie's crust tends to have a lot of fat and calories. Eat the pumpkin part and leave the crust on your plate. Also, use low fat options like reduced fat dessert whips or low fat ice cream instead of full fat whipped cream.

- Breads and rolls? Why bother with all the other great food around! However, if your holiday is incomplete without bread, go with the whole grain variety and skip the butter.

- Take your multivitamin. It's too easy to neglect good nutrition during the holiday season, so continuing to take your multivitamin should be a priority.

- Exercise! Mall walking counts, as does walking up the stairs to your apartment or classes instead of taking the elevator. Make appointments with yourself, and a buddy if possible, to walk, ride bikes or go to the gym. Exercise helps reduce stress, keeps your mood up and helps to keep those extra holiday pounds off.

Recovering from a Big Eating Day

- Don't fast the day after the big dinner or party. Instead, go back to eating healthy, well-balanced meals with plenty of fruits and vegetables. Fasting just makes you more likely to binge on unhealthy foods again.
- Give yourself a break. Just because you ate 4 different desserts last night doesn't mean you should abandon your healthy eating plans. Don't lose hope. Accept that it's human to go a little overboard sometimes, and get back to eating healthy foods in reasonable portions the next day.
- Continue with your exercise regimen. Over-exercising to make up for overeating can lead to injury and just make you really tired and likely to abandon exercising. If you don't have a regular exercise plan, start walking each day. Be sure to check with your doctor before starting any exercise plan if you have health problems.
- Get enough sleep. Being tired from lack of sleep makes it difficult to exercise or to fully manage your school responsibilities. It also can lead to overeating as you try to keep your energy level up. Planning your schedule to allow for adequate sleep can keep your mood and energy level up.
- Drink lots and lots of water. Alcohol, caffeine, and salty holiday foods can be very dehydrating, and people can often mistake being hungry for being thirsty. So keep that water bottle full and by your side.

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