

The
READY|SET|STRONG
HOLIDAY
Survival Guide

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Tips for Holiday Health

With a plethora of special occasions and excuses to indulge, the holiday season can wreak havoc on your diet unless you're prepared to tackle those festive buffets and eggnog-filled nights. Preventing holiday weight gain and maintaining your normal healthy diet is definitely possible with a little planning. First, don't accept the mentality that you can indulge now and start your diet and exercise regimen when New Year's comes around. You'll be fighting an uphill battle with even more calories to burn! Food is meant to be savored, just not in excess!

Enjoy the tips below that outline how to navigate your way through the holiday season as well as some ideas for healthy variations of your traditional holiday favorites!



Have a plan

before attending a holiday gathering. Adjust your diet and workout schedule, if necessary, the day of the party to compensate for the food you'll be eating later that night. If you know you'll be at a party tonight, skip the desserts at work during the day.



Maintain your exercise schedule

or modify it to fit your situation. If you're not going to be home for your usual workout, bring running shoes with you to enjoy exercise outside with family and friends. A game of catch or tennis before dinner is a great way to spend time with family and stay fit. You can also research gyms in the area where you'll be staying and make exercising a family activity. Remember that working out can help reduce stress, regulate your appetite and maintain your weight.



Stash healthy foods in your desk at work so you're not as tempted by the treats piling up at the office.

TRICKS TO TRY

- ✓ **Try to keep communal office goodies out of view**, either in an area that isn't as highly trafficked as the kitchen or the break room, or in dark containers or covered dishes. In one study, people ate 26 percent more Hershey's Kisses when the candies were in clear dishes versus white ones. And when the chocolates were placed six feet away, the average person ate only four a day, as opposed to nine a day when they were within arm's reach.
- ✓ **Before you allow yourself a splurge, do something healthy**, like eating a piece of fruit, walking around the office for five minutes, or climbing a few flights of stairs.
- ✓ **Plan on taking home whatever tempts you**, and delay the daily indulgence until just before bedtime. At that point, you're less likely to crave another treat immediately than you would during your afternoon coffee break, especially if the whole box is no longer around.



Don't go shopping at the mall hungry.

To cut down on the lure of the food court, never go to the mall on an empty stomach.

TRICKS TO TRY

- ✓ **Plan your shopping route so you don't pass the Cinnabon stand a dozen times.** The obvious reason? Both sights and smells can coax you to eat, and with some vendors purposefully wafting their aromas your way, saying no can feel impossible.
- ✓ **Choose a proper restaurant over the grab-and-go food court whenever you can.** And request a table away from loud sounds and distractions, which can cause you to eat more. The bright lights and noisy hard surfaces can speed up the rate at which you eat and lead to overeating.
- ✓ **Avoid fast-food places that emphasize red in their color schemes.** Red has been shown to stimulate the appetite more than many other colors, and many restaurants add it to their decor in everything from the flowers on the table to the squiggles on the plates.



Eat a snack

before hitting up the holiday party. If you go to a party or holiday dinner hungry, you'll be more likely to overeat and will have more difficulty resisting the tempting high calorie and high fat treats. A good pre-party snack should include a glass of water, some protein and high fiber carbs, such as an apple with peanut butter or whole grain crackers and cheese.

TRICKS TO TRY

- ✓ **Eat breakfast.** This has been shown to prevent overeating later in the day.
- ✓ **Limit the number of high-calorie foods on your party plate.** Research has shown that when faced with a variety of foods with different tastes, textures, smells, shapes and colors, people eat more—regardless of their true hunger level. Cutting down on your personal smorgasbord can decrease what you end up eating by 20 to 40 percent.
- ✓ **Choose foods wisely, filling your plate with low-calorie items,** such as leafy green salads, vegetable dishes and lean proteins, and taking smaller portions of the richer ones. That way you can eat a larger amount of food for fewer calories and not feel deprived.
- ✓ **Pop a sugar-free mint in your mouth.** When you've had enough (and don't want to eat more), the feeling of a fresh palate can curb additional noshing.
- ✓ **Use small plates.** This is a good tip for all year, not just during the holidays. Studies show that people who switch to smaller plates or bowls consume fewer calories. Grab an appetizer plate instead of a large entrée plate to prevent overindulging.



Assess all the food options

and choose which foods you really want to eat. While you might really love chocolate chip cookies, remember that your Aunt Molly's pecan pie only comes once a year. Think through which foods you really want and choose a combination of a small portion of your "treats" mixed with healthy foods like fresh fruits or vegetables.

TRICKS TO TRY

- ✓ **Eat with a small group when you can.** One study found that dining with six or more people can cause you to eat 76 percent more, most likely because the meal can last so long. (After an hour of staring at the stuffing, you're more likely to have seconds.) At a big sit-down supper, be the last one to start and the second one to stop eating.
- ✓ **Sit next to a fellow healthy eater** (there's strength in numbers). Or sidle up to that uncle who eats slowly, so his pace can slow yours.
- ✓ **Wait for all the food to be on the table before making your selections.** People who make their choices all at once eat about 14 percent less than those who keep refilling when each plate is passed.
- ✓ **Keep visual evidence around of what you've consumed** so you don't forget. Leave an empty bottle of wine or beer in view and you'll be less tempted to drink more.



Stay away from the buffet table.

Once you've filled your plate, moving away from the table can prevent overeating. Take sensible portions so you don't end up eating too much. Remember that the holidays are about spending time with family and friends, so enjoy their company instead of eyeing the food table. If your hands feel empty once you've finished your food, keep them busy with a low- or no-calorie beverage.

TRICKS TO TRY

✓ **Use smaller plates and serving utensils.** Try a salad or dessert plate for the main course and a teaspoon to serve yourself. What looks like a normal portion on a 12-inch plate or a trough-like bowl can, in fact, be sinfully huge. In one study conducted at the Food and Brand Lab at Cornell University, even nutrition experts served themselves 31 percent more ice cream when using oversize bowls compared with smaller

bowls. The size of the serving utensil mattered, too. Subjects served themselves 57 percent more when they used a three-ounce scoop versus a smaller scoop.

✓ **Pour drinks into tall, skinny glasses,** not the fat, wide kind. Other studies at Cornell have shown that people are more likely to pour 30 percent more liquid into squatter vessels.



Bring your own dish

so you can guarantee a healthy option. Most hosts would love help with the cooking. Ask them what they're preparing and suggest some dishes you could prepare. Check out the suggestions below for some healthy culinary ideas.

TRICKS TO TRY

✓ **Eat the best-for-you offerings first.** For example, hot soup as a first course—especially when it's broth-based, not cream-based—can help you avoid eating too much during the main course.

✓ **Stand more than an arm's length away from munchies** while you chat, so you're not tempted to raise your hand to your mouth every few seconds.

TRICKS TO TRY

✓ **Concentrate on your meal while you're eating it.** Focus on chewing your food well and enjoying the smell, taste, and texture of each item. Research shows that mealtime multitasking (whether at home or at a party) can make you pop

mindless calories into your mouth. Of course, dinner-party conversation is only natural, but try to set your food down until you're finished chatting so you are more aware of what you're taking in.



Beware of calorie-laden drinks.

Alcoholic drinks can pack more calories than a burger and fries at McDonald's, and drinks during the holidays are no exception. Eggnog, hot cocoa and cider all contain excess calories. Try to stick with your low-calorie choices such as wine, light beer or mixed drinks made with low- or no-calorie mixers. Also, try to drink a glass of water between alcoholic beverages. It helps prevent hangovers and keeps your waistline the way you want it.



Pay attention

to what you're eating. Food is meant to be enjoyed so slow down and savor the foods you've chosen. Take small bites and chew your food thoroughly to prevent overeating and to truly appreciate your food. Your host has spent hours slaving away in the kitchen. Why not slow down and savor all that hard work? Also, beware of mindless eating which can happen if you settle down on the couch with your hand in the chip bowl.



Beware of snacking.

Mindless snacking while cooking or socializing can add hundreds of excess calories that you don't ever realize you're consuming. Eat a nutritious snack or chew gum while cooking to prevent yourself from snacking mindlessly.



If you're full

don't be afraid to say no to seconds. While family members or friends may push you to eat more, remember that it's your decision what you eat. You'll feel better afterwards if you say no to seconds when you're full than if you keep eating.



If you overeat don't beat yourself up.

Just because you ate too much at one meal doesn't mean you should give up your health-conscious ways and stop eating healthy. Make sure your next meal is lighter and then return to your usual eating pattern. Remember that one meal alone won't make you gain weight. It takes 3500 excess calories to gain a pound. Lastly, a nice long workout later that day or the next can help burn those excess calories you consumed during your holiday splurge.



Begin a tradition

of hitting the trails, going on a family bike ride, or playing a game of touch football the morning after a holiday meal. This will force you to get in some exercise the next day while enjoying time with family.



Don't turn the day after a holiday meal into round 2 of holiday eating.

With your fridge filled with leftovers it can be difficult not to indulge in these foods the next day. Try supplementing the leftovers with healthier items, like fruits and vegetables, so that you can enjoy your favorites again without the extra calories.

INSTEAD OF...



Mashed Potatoes

Choose **mashed sweet potatoes** which contain more nutrients including fiber, vitamin C, potassium, and vitamin A. If you want to make traditional mashed potatoes, consider replacing milk and butter with broth. Adding cauliflower to mashed potatoes provides extra fiber and nutrients and will be equally filling with fewer calories.



Dark Meat Turkey with Gravy

Choose **white meat** and skip the skin. Turkey is a great source of lean protein if you choose the right parts. If you want to drizzle a small amount of gravy on top, try refrigerating the gravy beforehand and skimming the fat off the top to cut calories and fat in your savory topping.

INSTEAD OF...



Corn Bread Stuffing

Try making your stuffing with **whole wheat bread** and add healthy additions like nuts, fruits, and vegetables. The added fiber in the bread, fruit, and vegetables will keep you full with fewer calories and less fat.



Pumpkin Pie

Serve **pumpkin pie filling with cool whip**. Cutting out the crust will save calories and fat, and pumpkin is a good source of beta-carotene. You can also substitute low fat evaporated milk or light cream into your pumpkin pie recipe.



Green Bean Casserole

Modify the recipe by choosing a **low fat cream of mushroom soup** or using light butter. You could also serve green beans as a cold salad with nuts, onions and light Italian dressing. Green beans are a great source of many nutrients including vitamin C, vitamin K, vitamin A and potassium and can be an excellent healthy addition to a holiday feast if prepared correctly.



Cranberry Sauce

Cranberry sauce from a can is very high in sugar and not nearly as nutritious as whole fresh cranberries. Cranberries are an excellent source of vitamin C and cooking cranberry dishes from scratch is a healthier way to enjoy the fruit. Try cooking your own cranberry sauce, adding dried cranberries to a salad, or baking cranberry muffins.

Finally, I encourage you to **find alternative coping strategies for dealing with holiday stress** other than food. There's nothing wrong with emotional eating per se, only when it's our only coping strategy for dealing with difficult emotions.

How can you be proactive in taking care of yourself to avoid crisis mode?

Do you need to set some boundaries with work or relationships?

What about making sleep a priority?

Would it help to make a master list of all you would like to accomplish the next few months and allocate time accordingly, so you aren't trying to do it all at once?

What will help you wind down at the end of the day or the end of the week?

Do you need to set boundaries for thinking about or talking about food and weight with family and friends?

Putting some thought into this will pay dividends.

Start TODAY by ordering yourself (and those ppl. on your 'Nice' list) a copy of [Go From Stressed to Strong!](#)

AIM TO BE PROACTIVE RATHER THAN REACTIVE.

I wish you a very happy holiday!

Stay Strong,

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