

INDULGE MINDFULLY — 10 TIPS FOR HOLIDAY EATING

The holiday season is right around the corner. It is the time of year that brings not only an abundance of joyful gatherings, bright decorations, and cheer, but also an excess of junk food, calories, and feasts with large portion sizes. The average person gains roughly one to two pounds during the weeks between Thanksgiving and New Year's. According to the National Institutes of Health, most Americans never lose the weight they gain during the holidays. Each pound can add up over the years. While the holidays are about treating yourself and others, here are ten helpful tips that can allow us to enjoy the season's indulgences without overdoing it:

- 1. Use your plate to map out portion sizes.** As a rule of thumb, use the plate method to visualize portion sizes for your meal. For a plate that has a 9-inch-diameter, half of the plate should be filled with non-starchy vegetables, such as green beans, salads, broccoli, or asparagus. A quarter of the plate should be carbohydrates, such as pasta, rice, bread, or potatoes. The other quarter of the plate should be protein, including fish, meat, or poultry. Don't forget to limit the fat-laden condiments like butter, mayonnaise, or sour cream.
- 2. Don't skip meals.** Many of us are tempted to skip a meal so you can splurge at an event later that day. This is setting yourself up for a pig-out. Skipping breakfast or lunch may cause you to overeat and consume more calories than if you had just eaten beforehand.
- 3. Don't arrive on an empty stomach.** Similar to #2, showing up to a gathering hungry or on an empty stomach may cause you to binge-eat or consume more calories in the long run. Having a small healthy snack such as fresh fruits or a handful of nuts before you arrive can help you avoid overeating.
- 4. Eat slowly.** Take your time while eating and enjoy the flavors in the food. It takes your brain about 20 minutes to signal your stomach that you are satisfied. Before getting up for a second serving, make sure you have given your body enough time to register. Putting your eating utensil down while chewing can also help with this. By pacing yourself, taking smaller bites, and chewing thoroughly, you can fill up with less food and reduce your caloric intake overall.
- 5. Choose wisely and be selective.** When it comes to higher-calorie foods, select the foods you want most. If you know you love desserts, opt out of appetizers, or vice versa. The key is not to waste calories on foods you don't love. It is okay to politely decline.
- 6. Limit alcohol intake.** Alcoholic beverages are high in calories and provide no nutritional value. Juices, sodas, and other mixers are often loaded with sugar, which becomes stored as fat in your body. The worst calorie offenders include eggnog, long island iced tea, and margaritas. In addition, drinking alcohol often increases appetite and decreases mindfulness, which can lead to poorer food choices and overeating.
- 7. Utilize the buddy system.** Partner with a friend or family member to split dessert with. Sharing allows you to still enjoy dessert, but cuts the calories. You two can also be accountable for one other and make sure neither of you eat more than you intend to.
- 8. Drink plenty of water.** Our mind often mistakes thirst for hunger. Not only does water rev up our metabolism and flush out toxins from our bodies, drinking a glass before you start your meal can trick your body into feeling fuller. The Institute of Medicine recommends adults drink at least eight glasses of water daily. Spice up your water by adding cucumbers, strawberries, or lemons. This is a much healthier alternative to alcohol or high-caloric holiday drinks.
- 9. Remember to stay active.** Holiday schedules become very busy with event-planning, shopping, and social gatherings. However, it is still important to plan ahead and designate time to exercise and stay active. The American Heart Association recommends adults get at least 150 minutes each week of moderately vigorous physical activity. If you know you are attending a holiday feast, go the extra mile and burn more calories than you normally would before the big event.
- 10. Make smart substitutions.** You can make your favorite recipes healthier by using lower-fat alternative ingredients. The American Heart Association suggests these smart substitutions:

Instead of..	Use This...
Whole or heavy cream	Low-fat or skim milk
White flour	Mix ½ white, ½ whole-wheat flour
Butter	Olive oil
White pasta or bread	Whole-grain pasta or bread
Egg	Egg whites
Sour cream	Low-fat unsalted cottage cheese
Cream cheese	Soft margarine blended with unsalted low-fat cottage cheese

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If you have questions regarding this information, please consult your medical professional.