

## Healthy Holiday Eating

Many people eagerly anticipate enjoying their favorite holiday dishes as the weather gets colder. For others, though, the challenge of eating right and preventing holiday weight gain can be quite stressful. If you're one of those people who dread dealing with holiday eats, try these tips to make the holidays easier on your waistline.

### Work It In!

Enjoy a brisk walk or play a game of football with family and friends to burn extra calories. Also, try to eat right and exercise during the days before and after a large holiday meal.

### Food Matters

Make sure you eat lightly and drink plenty of water during the day of a holiday meal to prevent overeating. At the meal, choose the foods you really want to eat – don't waste calories on foods you don't truly enjoy! Then, take smaller portions of the foods you truly want. Savor each bite and eat slowly. Don't forget about what you drink - many festive drinks like eggnog, hot chocolate, and alcoholic beverages pack in a lot of calories! Also, remember that dishes that may seem healthy because they contain vegetables (i.e. green bean or sweet potato casserole) are often high in fat and calories.

### Make a Switch

You CAN enjoy those special holiday foods! Try modifying your recipes to make them healthier.

- To cut down on fat in baked goods, you can replace half the butter, shortening, or oil with unsweetened applesauce, mashed bananas, or prune puree.
- You can also decrease the fat by using lower-fat preparation methods like braising, broiling, grilling, or steaming.
- Try using nonstick baking dishes and nonstick cooking sprays instead of coating a pan in butter or oil.
- To cut down on salt, use lower-sodium ingredients in main dishes, soups, and casseroles, then use less salt for seasoning.

- To get more fiber, vitamins, and minerals, try subbing in whole grain pasta or brown rice in starchy dishes.
- Boost the nutrition content of salads by using darker greens rather than iceberg, and cut down on high-calorie toppings like cheese, croutons, and dressing.

### **Change Your Focus**

Enjoy time with friends and family and make new memories – break out the board games or build a snowman! Food can be a fun and exciting part of the holidays but try to not make it the sole focus. Enjoy time with loved ones, try healthier versions of your recipes, and savor those once-a-year foods.

Happy Holiday Eating!



*Note: This article was written by **Leia Kedem, RD**, a UI Extension educator.*