

Healthy Eating for a Happy Holiday – Ask an Expert

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The holidays are filled with family, friends, and food traditions. We look forward to the feeling of connection, satisfied taste buds, and new memories; however, many overindulge for the sake of tradition. An average American consumed about 4,500 calories on Thanksgiving Day when considering pre-meal snacking, the actual dinner, dessert, then evening leftovers. That is more than double the average recommendation for healthy adults. So, is there a way to indulge in our favorite traditions while also indulging in our health?

Luckily, the answer is yes! By setting ourselves up for success and focusing more on adding healthy opportunities, we will feel better, take care of the bodies that have carried us through the year, and fully enjoy the things we love most about the holidays. Consider these tips for adding healthy options to your holiday fun.

1. **Focus your attention on adding the healthy** rather than “falling off the wagon for the holidays.” You don’t have to eat flavorless food. You also don’t have to overindulge to the point of feeling sick. Find ways to add a few healthy options to your favorite traditional meals and find ways to add fun and connecting movement. You can still enjoy, indulge, AND make healthy decisions.
2. **Indulge in the complete mealtime experience.** Enjoy the flavors, smells, feelings of connection, conversations, and environment. You can fully indulge by slowing down, connecting with people around you, enjoying each bite, and listening to your body when it tells you you’re done eating.

3. **Eat what you love and leave what you like.** It’s easy to get into the habit of trying everything and cleaning your plate. But if you don’t love the taste, or if your body is feeling satisfied, you don’t have to take another bite. Don’t select foods you really don’t like just because they are there.
4. **Add healthy choices.** If your family enjoys snacks, try healthy options like nuts, citrus, or dried fruits. Add a few fruit and vegetable side dishes at mealtimes. Look for fruit and vegetable food art ideas and enjoy them with the family.
5. **Make healthy food choice swaps.**

- * Try whole wheat bread instead of white.

- * Switch out ham for leaner meats like turkey, chicken, or seafood.

- * Replace two or three unhealthy side dishes with a vegetable dish.

- * Add fruit or swap an ingredient in your dessert recipe for a healthier alternative.

- * Use herbs and spices instead of salt for flavor.

- * Switch out sugar-sweetened beverages with water or warm teas.

6. **Stay hydrated.** Sometimes our bodies crave unhealthy options when we are simply thirsty. Keep water at the table, ensure you’re hydrated before eating, and listen to your body as you take each bite.
7. **Don’t get hangry.** You will enjoy a meal more if you are not starving. Don’t skip meals during the day. This will let you focus on enjoying the full experience of flavors, textures, and sensations instead of frantically satisfying your hunger.
8. **Pack the snacks.** Keep healthy snacks in your purse, bag, or car as you are on the run preparing for the holidays.
9. **Serve meals on a smaller plate** to help with portion perceptions. Give yourself the freedom to refill your plate if needed.
10. **Don’t skip sleep.** Being tired can dull our sense of hunger and fullness and lead to less healthy eating behaviors.
11. **Create family holiday traditions involving active movement** for at least 30 minutes daily. This could be a family flag football game, hiking,

playing in the snow, walking, relay races, etc. Just get moving, and make it fun!

We can create better health through small and simple choices that lead to better experiences with our favorite traditions and connections. Simple, healthy choices turn into healthy habits, which turn into healthy lifestyles. So, this holiday season, add a sprinkle of health to your holiday fun!

For those with diabetes, find healthy tips for holiday eating [here](#).

Contact

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