

Healthy Eating for the Holiday Season

When we think of holidays, we usually think about our families and all the tempting holiday treats. Who can think about Thanksgiving without thinking of turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce, and pumpkin pie? While we often associate holidays with indulging in good food, most of us don't consider how these foods affect our health. Eating healthy during the holidays does not mean you have to sit in the other room chewing on carrot sticks while your family and friends feast. By following a few simple guidelines, you can still eat your favorite dishes while maintaining healthy eating habits.

Eating healthy over the holidays

Maintaining your healthy eating habits is easy to do, no matter if you are traveling to visit friends and family or having the festivities at your house. Follow these guidelines and enjoy a nutritious holiday season.

- **Modify your recipes.** You don't have to avoid your favorite holiday foods to eat healthy. Modifying aspects of a recipe, like the cooking technique and ingredients, can make it healthier while still tasting great. Check the nutrition portion of the Texercise handbook for more information about how to modify recipes and how to cook with substitutions.
- **Eat smaller portions.** Overeating is easy to do during the holiday season. It is important to remember the rules of portion control. Continue to divide your plate into four equal sections. Fill two of the sections with vegetables/fruits, one section with grains, and the last section with protein. To better understand the correct portion sizes for specific foods, look at the Texercise Portion Guide fact sheet.
- **Don't eat everything.** With the holiday season comes the holiday feast. Be selective about the foods you eat during the holidays. Look at all of the food options and select the healthiest dishes.
- **Eat slowly.** Many times, people overeat because they eat too fast and don't allow their stomach the necessary time to register that they are full. Chew slowly and savor each bite – you will eat less and enjoy your food more.
- **Don't starve yourself.** Whether you are traveling to eat a holiday dinner with friends and family, or cooking the meal at your house, do not starve yourself before the meal. Don't go the whole day without eating; make sure to eat every meal and have healthy snacks in between. By doing this, you will be less likely to overeat at the big holiday feast and will feel better.

- **Drink water.** Pass on alcoholic and sugary drinks to avoid consuming extra calories. Instead opt for water, fat-free or low-fat milk, or unsweetened tea.
- **Be realistic.** Don't try going on a strict diet over the holidays. Trying to follow a diet over the holiday season is hard with all the food temptations around, so be realistic and don't start a diet during that time. Instead follow the rules above to continue eating nutritiously without feeling guilty if you over indulge.

These tips on eating healthy over the holidays can be used for other situations as well. Use them for family reunions, weddings, parties, or any social gathering where food is served.

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