

Healthy Eating Tips For Your Holiday Feast!

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As the festive season approaches we can't help but think about the tasty holiday temptations that come with it. Here are a few tips that will help you and your family make healthful food and beverage choices over the holiday.

- Keep a stock of healthy, 'nutrient dense' snacks in the fridge and cupboard for family and guests. Choose fruit, such as mandarin oranges, grapes, or apples, vegetables such as cut-up carrots, cherry tomatoes or broccoli, low-fat yogurt, skim milk, light cream cheese and cheeses, hummus, whole-grain crackers and breads, cereals, lean deli meats (chicken, turkey or roast beef), nuts and seeds, and water.
- Eat a light snack before going to holiday parties. If you arrive hungry you are more likely to overeat and less likely to resist the temptation of eating higher fat/calorie foods. Try eating a piece of fruit, a small carton of low fat yogurt, or some cheese and high fibre crackers before you head out.
- Think ahead and make a plan. Where will you be, who you will be with, what foods will be available? Decide what foods are special to you and those that you could do without then make a plan of action. It is easier to deal with tasty food temptations if you already have a plan.
- Eat slowly and enjoy and savor every tasty bite. When you are done, do a mental check – are you still hungry, not sure or just having trouble resisting the delicious temptations? Listen to your hunger and full cues. If you are truly still hungry then have a little more. If not, try popping a mint or stick of gum in your mouth, getting a tall glass of water to sip on or positioning yourself away from the buffet table or food trays.
- Reduce the fat in holiday meals and recipes. Try using applesauce in place of oil in your favorite holiday breads and cakes; try plain nonfat yogurt in place of sour cream. Offer gravies and added fats (butter, margarine, oil, salad dressings) on the side and accompany sweet desserts with fresh fruits.
- Choose your beverages wisely. Alcohol is high in calories and can dehydrate you, so drink in moderation. Shake things up with sparkling water, diet sodas and 'virgin' Caesars.
- Focus on the holiday occasion, not the food. Celebrate, give thanks and enjoy your friends and family. The taste of holiday foods is just a bonus!

- Make physical activity part of holiday events. Plan a family walk after the big feast or spend the afternoon playing family football, tag or soccer. Anything to get everyone moving is great!
- Maintain perspective. Overeating one day won't make or break your healthy eating habits. If you over-indulge at a holiday meal, relax and put it behind you. Return to your usual eating habits the next day without guilt.

Aim for balance and moderation. All foods fit into a healthy eating plan when chosen in moderation. Choose a variety of healthy foods and don't panic if you eat too much once in a while. Enjoy and remember what holidays are all about!

If you would like more information on healthy holiday eating, stretching your food dollar, cutting the cost of cooking or community programs that are available to help with limited food budget over or after the holidays, please contact the Northwestern Health Unit.