



## 12 Ways to Make the Holidays Healthier

1. **Be realistic.** The average American gains 6 pounds between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. Trying to lose weight during the holidays will be an uphill battle. Instead, setting your goal at maintaining your weight during the holidays will be more realistic. Take small portions of the foods you really love instead of depriving yourself altogether.
2. **Do not arrive at holiday parties hungry.** Nine out of 10 individuals will overeat if they skip meals. Our bodies are designed to eat every four to five hours. Skipping meals to "save calories" for party eating will set you up for failure. Eat a light meal or snack before a party and you will arrive in control of your appetite and actually eat less.
3. **Make time for exercise during the holidays.** Exercise will help burn off some additional calories and help reduce stress. Take a family walk before or after your holiday meal, pick up your walking pace while shopping, park further away, use the stairs instead of the escalator or elevator, or schedule a walking date with a friend.
4. **Be a social butterfly.** Spend time enjoying the company of others by socializing away from the buffet table, bar, or kitchen. The more you talk, the less you will eat. Eat slowly and savor the flavor.
5. **Have a healthy holiday spirit.** Cocktails, mixed drinks, "real" eggnog and other holiday drinks can quickly add up in calories. Good alternatives for celebrations can include sparkling or hot apple cider, light egg nog or seltzer mixed with fruit juices.
6. **Do not wear loose-fitting clothes during the holidays.**
7. **Be a little fruity.** Experiment with seasonal produce to lighten up your meals. Consider chutneys as an accompaniment to meats, slices of pears or oranges in your salad, cranberries or dried fruits in rice pilaf, or apple sauce substituted for some of the fats in your baking.
8. **Take the focus off food.** Plan group activities with family and friends that aren't all about food. Instead of baking cookies with your children, create non-edible projects like wreaths, dough art decorations or a gingerbread house. Start a new tradition such as serving a holiday meal to the community, playing games or going on a walking tour of decorated homes.
9. **Watch your appetizers.** Choose appetizers that are low in fat and high in nutrients such as Romaine spears, cut-up vegetables, fruit kabobs and roasted red pepper or garbanzo dip. Limit high fat choices such as fried chicken wings, miniature sausages and most cheeses. Remember, these tasty morsels can be a meal in itself!

10. **Lighten up meals that you prepare.** Try some of the following ideas:

- ❖ Use two egg whites in place of one egg.
- ❖ Replace cream or whipping cream with evaporated skim milk.
- ❖ Use fat-free versions of sour cream or cream cheese.
- ❖ Replace whole milk with skim milk.
- ❖ Try substituting applesauce for at least half the oil, margarine or butter when baking muffins and quick breads like banana bread.
- ❖ For dips, sauces and pie toppings use non-fat yogurt or fat-free sour cream.
- ❖ Top casseroles with crushed flake cereal instead of fried onion rings.
- ❖ Choose reduced-fat cheeses for salads and casseroles.
- ❖ Choose recipes that call for baking, broiling, roasting, steaming, braising, grilling, poaching or stir-frying.
- ❖ Sauté vegetables and meat in wine, water or broth instead of butter.
- ❖ Trim visible fat from meat before cooking and drain off all fat after cooking.
- ❖ Remove fat from soups, stews, sauces and gravies by chilling and skimming it off.

11. **Offer to bring a healthy dish to share.** Need some suggestions?

- ❖ [www.cdc.gov/Features/HealthyHolidays/](http://www.cdc.gov/Features/HealthyHolidays/) - click on link for Healthy Recipes in the "Take the Extra Calories Out of Cooking!" section.
- ❖ [www.mayoclinic.com/healthy/holiday-recipes/NU00645](http://www.mayoclinic.com/healthy/holiday-recipes/NU00645)

12. **Make your work environment a healthy environment.** Provide healthy foods at meetings, parties and celebrations. Have healthy options in your vending machines. Make your breaks a time to be active. Go for a walk, do some stretches, hula hoop, jump rope, or do yoga.

### **Holiday Cooking: Keeping it Safe!**

As the holidays approach we like to celebrate by entertaining friends and family, throwing parties, and preparing feasts. From the buffet table to the office party, food moves center stage throughout the holiday season. Be sure to keep food safe by following basic food safety steps...

**Clean:** Wash hands and food-contact surfaces often. Bacteria can spread throughout the kitchen and get onto cutting boards, knives, sponges, and counter tops.

**Separate:** Don't cross-contaminate--don't let bacteria spread from one food product to another. This is especially true for raw meat, poultry and seafood. Keep these foods and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods.

**Cook:** Cook to proper temperatures. Foods are properly cooked when they are heated for a long enough time and at a high enough temperature to kill the harmful bacteria that cause food borne illness.

**Chill:** Refrigerate promptly. Refrigerate foods quickly keeps most harmful bacteria from growing and multiplying. Refrigerators should be set at 40 F and the freezer at 0 F, and the accuracy of the settings should be checked occasionally with a thermometer.

#### **Resource Websites:**

<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/HolidayTips/>

<http://www.wellnessjunction.com/athome/nutrition/holtips.htm/>