

EXTERNAL – December 2018 Monthly Health Article – Healthy Holiday Eating

‘Tis the Season to Be Healthy: Helpful Tips for Smart Holiday Eating

Family feasts. Office parties. Casual get-togethers. Whatever the celebration during this festive time of year, there’s one thing that just about every gathering has in common: food. And while December may be the most wonderful time of the year, it can also be one of the most tempting times to abandon healthy eating habits.

Stay the course this season with these handy tips to help you indulge the healthy way through the holidays.

Drink water. Often times, what we think is hunger may actually be thirst, leading us to eat when what our body really needs is hydration. A good rule of thumb is to aim for drinking at least 64 ounces of water each day – more if you engage in regular physical exercise. Carry a water bottle around with you, and sip on it throughout the day.

Avoid sugary beverages. Soft drinks, bottled teas, smoothies, adult beverages – and yes, even fruit juices – can contain large amounts of sugar, which increase your risk for diabetes, heart disease and more. Ditch those empty calories, and have a cup of coffee, iced tea sweetened with a natural sweetener like Stevia or a warm mug of herbal tea instead.

Resist grazing. Tables laden with appetizers can draw partygoers like a magnet, but chips and dip, snack mix, cheese trays and other pre-meal treats can quickly cause the calories to stack up. Instead of continuous snacking, peruse the party spread and pick just one or two small bites to sample. And sip a glass of water before the main course. It will help you meet your water quota for the day and may help you consume less calories during dinner.

Pay attention to portion size. How much you consume is a key factor in maintaining a healthy weight. The increase in portion sizes over the years, coupled with the temptation to go back for that second or third helping of your favorite side dish, can make it especially tough to stay disciplined during the holidays. But how much is an appropriate portion? A portion the size of a deck of cards or a medium-sized fist is a good rule of thumb for how much to serve or eat. And there are a number of other tricks to help you manage the amount of food you eat – including picking up a small plate at the buffet line to eating slowly during the meal so you can more easily notice when you become full.

Be decisive. One of the most irresistible components of a holiday party is the dessert tray. Unfortunately, it can also be a minefield of sugar, calories and fat. Resist the urge to sample one of everything. Instead, choose one dessert that particularly appeals to you and really savor and enjoy it. You won’t go overboard on the sugar, and you’ll head home from the party guilt-free!

Plan ahead. If you know you will be heading to a party in the evening, balance out your food intake with a healthy salad with protein for lunch. If you’re heading to a potluck, bring a healthy dish that you enjoy.

Keep moving. Physical activity is an important part of maintaining your health and well-being, and that goes for the holiday season as well. Continuing your regular exercise program will help you combat any extra holiday calories and keep you feeling good through December and into the New Year.