

Ten Helpful Tips for Dealing with Holiday Eating

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Holiday parties and social gatherings can bring challenges to your normal nutritional routine. Here is a handy list of tips to help you navigate holiday eating!

- 1. Eat a snack before** social eating situations, such as an apple or baby carrots and string cheese. This will settle your hunger so you will not overindulge in party food.
- 2. Both offer to bring a healthy appetizer** as well as try to find out about the menu ahead of time so that you can pre-plan your meal. Healthy appetizer options include a fruit salad or a veggie tray with a healthy low-fat dip. Or try making a broccoli and radish wreath, or bring wheat crackers with a low-fat Jarlsberg or Cabot White Vermont Cheddar 50% reduced-fat cheese.
- 3. Once you arrive, first choose a hydrating beverage** to help with initial fullness and to help decrease overall alcohol intake. Choose beverages like club soda, Diet Sprite, Fresca, or decaffeinated diet sodas like Decaf Diet Coke.
- 4. Next, scan over your options and make a food plan** starting with putting fresh produce options on half of your plate (like the fruit or veggie tray appetizer you brought) and whole grain breads/crackers with low-fat toppings like lean luncheon meats or lean roast beef. Avoid breaded and deep fried appetizers. It is fine to save a small place on your plate for one bite of these types of options or a bite of dessert, but have three quarters of your plate be "food group" foods: fruits, veggies, lean meats, and grains!
- 5. Prioritize your fat choices.** Try to minimize your options to 1 to 2 sources of fat, choosing such options as cheese or a dip for your veggies, versus 4 to 6 sources if you have a plate full of breaded and fried foods or desserts.
- 6. Healthier dessert options** are the fruit fillings in fruit pies (hold the crust), oatmeal or gingersnap cookies, and pumpkin pie in a graham cracker crust.
- 7. Plan on filling your plate one time.** Then, sit down and take 20 to 30 minutes to enjoy your foods while chewing thoroughly and drinking your hydrating beverage between bites. Also talk and socialize between bites. Make your food last as long as possible to maximize your fullness.
- 8. Check in on your fullness by pausing halfway through and again two-thirds through** your plate and asking yourself "How much more do I want and need?" Give yourself permission to stop when you are starting to feel comfortably full (a 6 or 7 on a scale of 1–10, with 10 being uncomfortably full).
- 9. Give yourself a formal "stopping signal"** that your eating time is over when you are starting to feel comfortably full. This signal could be as simple as throwing your plate away, putting extra condiment on your plate to make it less appetizing, or brushing your teeth when you are done.
- 10. Position yourself with your back to the food table** as you are eating. When you are done, try to remove yourself from that room. Start to socialize in other parts of the home in which the party is being held.

