

## Holiday Diet Tips

Keeping up healthy habits can be a challenge during the five weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas, but that doesn't mean you have to pack on the pounds during the holidays. You can enjoy holiday celebrations (and the food) and still be healthy with these 10 tips.

1. **Squeeze in physical activity.** Being active not only burns extra calories, but it also helps lower stress levels and boosts your mood. If you don't have time for a full 30 minutes of exercise, break it down into two 15-minute or three 10-minute segments over the course of the day. You can also try wearing a pedometer and aim for 10,000 steps by the end of the day.
2. **Maintain a regular eating pattern.** Don't skip breakfast or lunch or attempt to save up calories for a party or gathering. If you deprive yourself during the day, you will be ravenous when you arrive at a party, which may lead you to reach for unhealthy foods and overeat. If you stayed fueled during the day you will be more likely to keep treats to moderate portions. Make sure you are filling up with nutritious foods full of fiber and protein to help keep you full. In addition, drink plenty of water during the day to keep you filled up and energized.
3. **Eat a small snack** (100 to 200 calories) an hour or two before a party, such as grapes and almonds or string cheese and an apple. This will take the edge off of your hunger so you aren't as easily tempted by all of the treats and will be less likely to overeat or make unhealthy food choices.
4. **Explore your options.** Survey the table before filling your plate so you know what you have to choose from. Rather than sampling everything that looks good, choose only a few of your favorite holiday treats. A good rule of thumb is to fill half of your plate with healthy options and the other half with your favorite treats.
5. **Be selective.** Make the majority of your splurges on dishes that you love and can only have during the holidays. If you don't love it, don't eat it. If it's something you can eat year-round, leave it. Don't waste the calories on something you won't completely enjoy.
6. **Downsize your plate.** Research has shown that the larger the size of the plate, the more people tend to serve themselves. Since people tend to eat what they are served, using a smaller plate can reduce the amount of food you can serve yourself and thus eat.
7. **Help your host.** Offer to bring a dish to the party - this guarantees that you will have at least one healthy item to eat. You don't even have to tell anyone that it's healthy!
8. **Drink wisely.** Start with low-calorie, nonalcoholic beverages like hot tea, diet or club soda or sparkling water to quench your thirst. If you choose to drink alcohol, alternate between alcoholic beverages and low-calorie, nonalcoholic drinks, and try to limit your intake to 1-2 drinks. Keep in mind that not only does alcohol have calories, but it can lower your inhibitions and your ability to resist high calorie foods.
9. **Talk more, eat less.** Socialize away from the kitchen or buffet table so you're not tempted by the foods. Also, remember that the holidays are about more than food—cherish the time you get to spend with friends and family rather than focusing on all of the goodies.

10. **Be realistic.** Focus on weight maintenance rather than weight loss during the holidays. Don't deprive yourself; healthy eats doesn't mean you never get to enjoy treats. In fact, if you are too rigid, it will most likely backfire and lead you to overeat. Enjoy your favorite holiday foods, but just indulge in moderation. If you overindulge, don't beat yourself up. One slip-up won't make you or break your eating plan; simply return to your usual eating plan the next day.