



Buzz, Body & Bites

A newsletter for actively aging adults
Virginia Cooperative Extension Family & Consumer Sciences
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Healthy Eating Over the Holidays

What is so special about the holidays? The holidays are a time for families and friends to come together. Many holidays are filled with an array of seasonal foods from turkey and pumpkin pies to a variety of side dishes and sweet desserts. Most gatherings are centered around food.

During the holidays, it is okay to consume our favorite holiday treats; however, it is important to have our health at the forefront of our minds. Many avoid their favorite foods; however, this is not needed. Is it possible to eat healthy over the holidays? The answer is yes, it is. It is important to have a Holiday Survival Plan to manage diseases such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes. Here are a few tips that can help you navigate the holidays.

Start with a Plan

- To combat the unwanted weight gain, it's important to start with a plan to assist you in eating healthy.
- It's important to eat close to your usual mealtime.
- If invited to bring a dish, offer to bring a healthy dish to the gathering.
- Do not skip meals to overindulge in a holiday meal.
- Focus on increasing your vegetable intake during your holiday meal. Monitor Portion Sizes
- Use a 9-inch plate at mealtime.
- Reduce serving sizes of recipes.
- Use smaller serving utensils

Stay Active

In order to combat eating during the holidays, staying active must be your secret weapon.

- You must create ways to increase your activity.
- Participate in activities with your family or friends.
- Find activities that you enjoy that will keep you moving.

Finally, one thing we don't think of is the effect of sleep on our eating habits. With the enormous amount of festivities and entertainment, individuals tend to lose sleep. When we are sleep-deprived, we tend to eat more and prefer high-fat, high-sugar foods. Aim for 7-8 hours of sleep nightly to prevent overeating.

Contributed by Crystal Wynn, PhD, RD, Associate Professor, Virginia State University

Strategies for making this holiday a healthy one

Lighten Up Recipes

We all have favorite recipes for the holidays, many of which can be high in fat and sugar. There are simple ways to modify these recipes to reduce the calories and keep the delicious flavor.

- Use fat-free items in desserts and sauces

- Enhance casseroles with spices and seasonings instead of butter/salt
- Bake, Stew, or Sauté' instead of frying
- Try using an air fryer instead of frying in oil

Buffet Survival

It is easy to overeat when selecting from a buffet of delicious, favorite holiday foods. Here are a few suggestions for enjoying your holiday buffets without overeating.

- Use a smaller plate for mealtime to limit the space you will have.
- Begin your meal with vegetables to curb your appetite.
- Start slow to ensure your brain alerts you that you are full.
- Add your favorite foods to your meal in smaller portions.

Mulled Cider

Mulled cider is great for entertaining during the Fall and Winter holidays. It is easy to make on the stove or in a slow cooker.

It is made with whole spices, which infuse the entire drink with a signature cozy flavor. B Traditional mulled spices include: cinnamon sticks, cloves, allspice berries, nutmeg, and star anise.

This recipe will make your kitchen smell delicious and bring a festive atmosphere to any occasion.

Ingredients (Makes 6 servings):

- 1 whole nutmeg
- 10 allspice berries
- 10 cloves
- 2 star anise
- 4 cinnamon sticks
- ½ gallon apple cider
- ¼ cup rum, optional
- 1 small orange, for garnish
- Whole cranberries, for garnish

Instructions:

1. Place the nutmeg, allspice, cloves, star anise and cinnamon sticks in the bottom of the pot where you will make the mulled cider. Toast over medium heat for 2 - 3 minutes.
2. Turn the heat to low and add the apple cider. Bring to below simmer. Warm over low heat for 1 hour (do not let it simmer).
3. Skim off any particulates or stir in.
4. Garnish with orange slices and cranberries before serving.

Flexibility Exercises: Bird Dog Exercise

1. Kneel on all fours, with your head and spine neutral.
2. Extend your left leg off the floor behind you while reaching out in front of you with your right arm.
3. Keeping your hips and shoulders squared, try to bring that leg and arm parallel to the floor.
4. Hold, then return to the starting position.
5. Repeat the exercise on both sides 10 times.

Hint: To add extra strengthening to this workout; Instead of returning to the start position, take your elbow to your knee for a crunch. Then, extend the arm and leg to parallel the floor, repeat.

Resources

USDA Food Safety & Inspection Service

Let's Talk Turkey: A consumer guide to safely roasting a turkey.

www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/poultry/lets-talk-turkey-roasting

Turkey recipes: www.eatturkey.org

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