



# HEALTHY EATING FOR THE HOLIDAYS



The holiday season is a time to bring out old family favorite recipes for sweet treats, homemade pies and savory dishes like buttery mashed potatoes and herbed stuffing. While some of these foods may not be great for the waist line, following a few simple tips will help you eat healthy during the holidays and still enjoy your favorite foods.

Some people may have a hard time envisioning how healthy eating and the holidays can go hand-in-hand, but it is possible, said Deana Hildebrand, Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension state specialist.

“For many of us, a big part of the holiday season includes sharing a meal with family and friends,” Hildebrand said. “Making a plan now will help ensure you make good choices while still enjoying some of your favorite foods.”

Although you may be tempted to skip breakfast or lunch so you can splurge on a holiday dinner, this reasoning is not a good idea. Skipping meals earlier in the day tends to lead to overeating at dinner. Instead, consider eating a protein and fiber-rich snack beforehand so you do not show up too hungry at the party.

“Vegetables and whole grains are great sources of fiber that help control appetite. Eating fiber-rich foods at every meal or snack will help control your hunger,” she said.

Christine Walters, Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension Maternal and Child Nutrition Program assistant specialist, said it is important to be mindful of what you eat once you arrive at the party.

“During any gathering, but especially over the holidays, it’s easy to overeat. Mindful eating includes eating only when you’re hungry, taking pauses between bites to socialize or drink water and getting up from the table when you’re full,” Walters said. “Remember, it takes your brain at least 20 minutes to realize when you’re full, so it’s important to allow time for satiety to kick in.”

Another strategy for healthy eating is choosing smaller portions. There is no need to avoid your holiday favorites, instead, just choose smaller portions. Walters said serving sizes are often much smaller than the portions that are served or those we take for ourselves.

“In a typical 2,000-calorie diet, a person should eat at least five and a half servings of protein,” she said. “Keep in mind, however, a portion of meat about the size of a deck of cards is equivalent to approximately three servings of protein. So, if you’re at Thanksgiving dinner, consider comparing your slice of turkey to a deck of cards.”

Because people bring out their best recipes during the holidays, save your calories for your special favorites, such as grandma’s homemade rolls or your aunt’s special pecan pie. To help avoid feeling overstuffed, you also may want to consider asking to take home a serving of something you simply did not have room for, so you can enjoy it the next day.

Something else to keep in mind is food is not the only source of calories, especially during the holidays. Many drinks are high in calories, whether it be eggnog, soda or juice.

Walters suggests drinking enough water throughout the holidays to stay hydrated and to limit your liquid calories.

“To add flavor to your water, consider lemon or lime slices,” Walters said. “Not only will it add flavor, it also adds more vitamin C to your diet. This can help keep you healthy since holiday gatherings can be a time for germs to spread. Other vitamin C-rich foods to consider are oranges, green peppers and strawberries.”

While holiday gatherings usually consist of plentiful food and drinks, it also can be a great opportunity to start a new tradition with family and friends.

“Exercise and physical activity during the holidays can be fun for everyone,” Walters said. “Considering walking with family and friends after a meal or playing an active game. Exercise is a key component of self-care. Holidays can be a stressful time for some and people can be tempted to eat because of stress or emotion. Taking care of yourself by eating healthy, drinking plenty of water and getting adequate amounts of sleep over the holidays can help you feel great.”

[pinterest.com/osufcs](https://pinterest.com/osufcs)



[twitter.com/okstateFCS](https://twitter.com/okstateFCS)



[facebook.com/okstateFCS](https://facebook.com/okstateFCS)



[humansciences.okstate.edu/fcs](https://humansciences.okstate.edu/fcs)



[instagram.com/oklahomastatefcs](https://instagram.com/oklahomastatefcs)

