

# How to Stay on Track with Your Health Goals During the Holidays

The holidays are a time for celebration and good cheer, but they can also be a time for unhealthy eating and weight gain. But luckily, these extra pounds can be avoided by using simple strategies, such as mindful eating and moderation. Learn how to stay on track and enjoy dessert too!

## TIP # 1 Never Skip Meals!

**Don't starve yourself beforehand!** This will only set you up for overindulging later. Instead, eat a small snack such as fruit and nuts before going to holiday parties. This will help to keep your blood sugar levels stable and prevent you from getting too hungry.

**Don't skip breakfast!** Research shows that people who eat breakfast tend to consume fewer calories throughout the day



## TIP # 2 Choose Carefully

Holiday meals are often large and buffet-style, offering a wide variety of foods. Before you start filling your plate, take a few minutes to survey all the food options. Categorize the foods into three groups:



**Foods you will eat:** Focus on nutrient-rich foods that will fill you up and satisfy your hunger. These foods include fruits and vegetables, lean protein sources (such as chicken, fish, or tofu), whole grains.

**Foods you will sample** be mindful of your portion sizes. It's okay to indulge in your favorite holiday treats but limit yourself to a small portion.

**Foods you will skip:** no need to feel guilty about skipping foods that you don't enjoy or that don't fit into your health goals.

**Be mindful of your selections.** When you're eating at a holiday feast, it's easy to get distracted by conversation and the festive atmosphere. However, it's important to be mindful of your selections and to savor each bite.

## TIP # 3 Control Portion Size

**Utilize a Smaller Plate:** Trick your mind by opting for a smaller plate, which naturally encourages smaller servings, helping you control portion sizes effectively.



**Begin with Veggies and Salad:** Prioritize filling your plate with vegetables or salad before moving on to entrees and desserts. This approach helps manage your calorie intake, ensuring you start with nutrient-dense options.

**Beware of 'Healthy' Choices:** A common mistake is assuming that large portions of foods perceived as healthy won't contribute to overeating. Stay mindful; even nutritious options can add up in calories if consumed excessively

**Control High-Calorie, High-Fat Foods:** Be mindful of creamy dishes, cheesy treats, gravies, and fried foods. Consume these in moderation.

**Choose one Dessert:** Like 1/2 cup of fruit cobbler, 1/8 of an 8-inch pie, a 2-inch square of cake, 2 small cookies, or 1/2 cup of ice cream.

## Tip # 4. Healthy swaps

**Baked, Not Fried:** Choose baked or air-fried snacks over deep-fried ones.

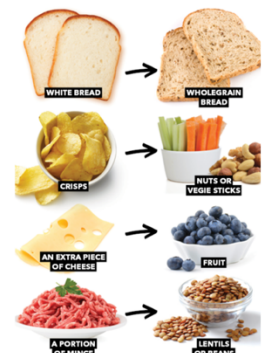
**Fruit & Dark Chocolate:** Opt for fresh fruit or a small piece of dark chocolate instead of sugary desserts.

**Yogurt-Based Dips:** Use yogurt-based dips instead of creamy ones for veggies.

**Whole Grains:** Pick brown rice or quinoa over white rice for added fiber and nutrients.

**Greek Yogurt & Coconut Milk:** Substitute heavy cream with Greek yogurt or coconut milk.

**Healthy Fats:** Use mashed avocado or nut butter instead of butter in recipes.



**Lean Proteins:** Choose grilled chicken, turkey, or tofu over processed meats.

**Reduced-Fat Cheese:** Opt for reduced-fat or goat cheese instead of regular cheese.

**Fresh Salsas & Chutneys:** Make fresh salsas or chutneys instead of sugary sauces.

#### TIP # 5 DON'T Rush, Enjoy Every Moment

**The 20-Minute Rule:** it takes about 20 minutes for your brain to register fullness after you start eating. Give your body time to send the signals of satisfaction to your brain.

**Savor the Flavor:** Eat slowly, appreciating the textures and flavors of each bite. Enjoy the sensory experience of your food.

**Wait Before Seconds:** If you're considering going back for seconds, pause for at least 10 minutes. Use this time to assess your hunger levels. Waiting allows you to determine if you're genuinely hungry for more or if you've already had enough.

## EAT SLOWLY



**IT TAKES YOUR BODY 20 MINUTE TO REALIZE IT'S FULL.**

#### TIP # 6 Cut the Sugary Drink. Drink Water

**Choose Water Over Sugary Drinks:** Take a simple yet impactful step by eliminating sugary drinks from your diet. For instance, just one can of Coke contains 140 calories. Consuming it daily for a year could result in an additional 14 pounds in weight gain. Opt for healthier alternatives like sparkling water, fruit-infused water, and unsweetened tea.



**Be Cautious with Alcohol:** Remember that alcohol not only adds extra calories but also weakens inhibitions. This can make it easier to give in to indulgent foods you might usually avoid.

**Stay Hydrated Before Meals:** Drinking a few glasses of water before a meal can help curb your appetite, encouraging you to eat less and potentially assist in weight loss.

#### TIP # 7 Socialize Away From Food

**Socialize First:** Resist going straight to the food. Take time to socialize & immerse yourself in the festivities before you eat.

**Stay Away from the Buffet:** Socialize away from the buffet or appetizers to minimize the temptation of mindless munching. Mindless eating can quickly add up calories without you even realizing it. Engaging with others away from food helps you stay in control and enjoy the holiday moments without overindulging!

#### TIP # 8 Get Your ZZZ

Going out more and staying out later often means cutting back on sleep.

**Sleep and Blood Sugar:** Sleep loss can make it harder to manage your blood sugar. When you're sleep deprived, you'll tend to eat more and prefer high-fat, high-sugar food. Aim for 7 to 8 hours per night to guard against mindless eating.



#### TIP # 9 Stay Active

The holiday season shouldn't revolve solely around food. The key isn't just what you eat, but how much you move. Even incorporating small bursts of exercise can be incredibly beneficial during the holidays.

**Plan Ahead for Physical Activity:** Anticipate days that might involve extended periods of sitting and plan for physical activities. Plan active family events, like turkey trots or a dance session to your favorite tunes.

**Take Post-Meal Strolls:** Instead of lounging in front of the TV after a holiday meal, consider taking a leisurely walk around your neighborhood or local park. Whether alone or with friends and family, a 15–30-minute walk can not only burn calories but also provides an opportunity for family bonding.



*By prioritizing movement and incorporating physical activity into your holiday routine, you not only counterbalance indulgent meals but also promote a healthier lifestyle for you and your loved ones*