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Holiday Diet Strategies for People with Diabetes

Monday, December 17, 2007



Ahh, the holidays - a time to gather with friends and family, to enjoy the festive decorations, and to celebrate. No doubt this means there will be an abundance of food and drinks everywhere. This can make extra trips to the buffet table a huge temptation.

This time of year can be very challenging for people with diabetes who are trying to maintain their healthy diets and their weight. However, it is possible to enjoy the celebrations without ruining your diet.

Holiday Diet Strategies for People with Diabetes

- 1. Plan ahead:** Eat a light, healthy snack like a small salad, half a sandwich, or a bowl of cereal before a party. This way you aren't ravenous when you arrive and can avoid overindulging.
- 2. Spread your portions out:** Start your holiday meal at lunch time instead of later on in the day. This way you can have "seconds" for dinner rather than overeating at one meal.
- 3. Be selective:** Choose to eat and prepare foods that are lower in fat and calories. If you know that your host's party doesn't usually include any healthy choices, ask if you can bring a side dish that you've prepared for the event. This way you can have at least one guilt-free option that won't ruin your diet plan.
- 4. Watch your carbs:** Holiday meals are heavy on [carbohydrate choices](#) such as sweet potatoes, pasta, cornbread, mashed potatoes, and - of course - tasty desserts. Limit your carb portion sizes to maintain your diet. Remember: 1/2 a cup of carbs is equal to one serving size. Most people with diabetes limit their carbs to 2-3 servings per meal. You can also share a dessert with a loved one, to satisfy your sweet tooth without the extra calories.
- 5. Go green:** Remember to eat your green, leafy [vegetables](#) - they are full of flavor, have fewer calories than other side dishes, and can curb your appetite.
- 6. Drink sensibly:** People with diabetes can experience low blood sugar levels (hypoglycemia) if they drink alcohol on an empty stomach. Have a small snack or drink your cocktail with your meal to avoid hypoglycemia. Avoid excess beverage intake or too many "liquid calories." Eggnog, punch, and cocktails can add unwanted calories to your meals - calories that could be better spent on food. Calorie-free drinks or diet mixers for cocktails are great choices.
- 7. Recruit your friends and family:** Ask loved ones and guests to help you stick to your diet by modifying recipes or allowing you to help with the meal preparation.
- 8. Skip the appetizers:** The main course will be worth the wait and you'll usually have more healthy options to choose from (especially if you've helped to prepare the meal).

The Bottom Line

Contrary to popular belief, it is possible to enjoy the festivities without sabotaging your diet. [Diabetes management](#) is a full-time job, but it doesn't mean that you can't join in and have fun celebrating the holidays. After all, the holidays are about more than just the food and drinks. If you keep to your diet and exercise plans and remember that moderation is key, you'll keep the extra pounds away.

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