



ARTICLE

Holiday Help

By Tracy Olgeaty Gensler, M.S., R.D., Best Life nutritionist

For many of us, the holidays are all about the food. After all, Grandma's pecan pie only comes around once a year. You can enjoy yourself without overdoing it by using these strategies.

Stick To Your Regular Meal Schedule. Skipping meals gives you an excuse to binge. It's tempting to skip breakfast and lunch and bank calories for a big holiday feast, but this tactic usually backfires. You'll find that you eat far more calories than if you had just eaten your regular meals.

Limit High-Fat Foods. Don't go overboard with high-fat foods, including cheese, fried foods (which you eliminate in Phase 2 and should limit in Phase 3), cream-based soups, meats such as pepperoni, sausage or salami, and pastries and bakery items. Sometimes it seems like there's not a healthy piece of food to be found at the celebrations, but look closely. You can usually find a green salad or raw veggies, fruit and some chicken or fish.

Bring Along a Nutritious Dish. Whether it's vegetable crudite with low fat dip, high-fiber bread or low-fat eggnog, your healthy dish can be enjoyed by everyone! There's no need to even divulge that it's nutritious.

Be Smart About Seconds. If you want to have seconds, take a plate full of steamed or raw vegetables and just a tiny portion of the entree and sides. It takes about 20 minutes for your brain to get the signal that you're full, so give yourself some time. Once you finish eating, stay and enjoy the conversation at the table. Or if you need to get away from the table, offer to help wash dishes, play a board game or go for a walk.

Have a Treat. At each holiday celebration, choose one treat to enjoy, a small sliver of pie or cake, a handful of chips, a few hors d'oeuvres, two small cookies or one small piece of fudge. It takes 3,500 extra calories above what your body needs to gain a pound. A small treat is not going to pack on extra weight, so take a deep breath, relax and enjoy your treat.

Signal the End. When you're finished eating, pop a stick of gum or a mint in your mouth. Make a mental note that this signals the end of eating. The festivities may go on and you can enjoy conversation but the eating is done.



Prepare for Surprise Eating Attacks. You're ready for parties and family get-togethers, but don't forget about the sneak attacks that can lead to unnecessary nibbling—like the leftover holiday cookies your husband brings home from work or the giant buttery pretzel with cheese dip your daughter asks for while shopping at the mall. If you've just had a meal, grab a bottled water and a healthy snack, such as a nonfat latte, a cup of broth-based soup or a piece of fruit to tide you over to your next meal. It's easy to eat too many high-calorie foods if you're caught off guard, but having an idea of the healthy options you can turn to will help you avoid finishing off that plate of cookies or cheesy pretzel.

The most important thing to keep in mind is that you don't have to be perfect—especially during the holiday season. A day of overeating won't ruin your diet. So try to use these tricks to stay on track, and cut yourself some slack. Consider it a gift to yourself!



ARTICLE

Holiday Fitness

By Michelle Hering, M.S., Best Life fitness expert

You may find that your calendar is jam packed this time of year—and trying to squeeze in a workout just seems too difficult. Believe it or not, you can carry your exercise routine through the holidays right on through to the New Year. Use these tricks to stay active all season long:

Don't be a party pooper. Invitations to holiday parties are not a pass to skip out on exercise. To avoid having to choose between a party and your workout, look at your calendar and schedule your workout time a few weeks in advance. Treat this time with the same respect you would any professional appointment, and don't cancel at the last minute. Then, feel free to schedule parties, lunches, shopping and dinner parties around your workouts.

Be a road warrior. If you're going to be traveling, don't forget to pack your sneakers! Also, check out your accommodations before you get there to see what they have to offer. Is there a gym, hiking trails or any water activities you can take part in? Often, if you are part of a larger fitness club, you will find other branches all over the country that you can visit.

Skip shortcuts. If you're hosting family for the holidays, you may feel too stressed and time-pressed to hit the gym. Don't worry about it—you can just work more activity into your daily life. (No need to add another item to your to-do list.) Try parking your car in the last spot in the parking lot. You'll get the double bonus of logging a bunch of extra steps and not having to fight over a spot! Or, lose the shopping cart and give your back, shoulder and biceps a workout by holding your shopping bags (place an even amount of weight in each hand). Plan to do all your errands in one place so you can walk from store to store rather than driving. Finally, don't forget that cleaning and cooking can count for exercise, too. Just watch your form and squeeze in a lunge or squat whenever you can.

