

Healthy Holiday Eating

Food is an important part of many holiday celebrations with family and friends. The foods served at these times can be higher in calories, fat, and/or sugar. It is also easy to overeat when there is a lot of food around. As a result, people may gain weight over the holidays.

With a little planning, you can make healthy food choices while enjoying holiday celebrations.

Holiday eating tips

Eat 3 meals per day

Plan to eat regularly, even on a party day. Skipping meals can make you very hungry, and more likely to overeat at the party.

If the event starts later, have a small snack (for example, yogurt and a piece of fruit) 1–2 hours before.



Limit appetizers

It is easy to eat a full meal's worth of calories from appetizers alone. For example, 2 chicken wings, 2 sausage rolls, and 1 mini quiche have the same calories as a healthy meal. Choose a few items that you enjoy, and leave the rest.

Visit with friends away from the appetizer or food table. Drink water or chew gum to help avoid mindless eating.



Re-think your drink

To limit calories from drinks:

- choose black coffee, tea or herbal tea (with or without 2%, 1% or skim milk)
- use flavoured coffee beans instead of adding flavoured coffee creamer
- try light beer or a wine spritzer (½ white wine and ½ club soda)
- mix an alcoholic drink with diet pop
- add extra flavours to water without extra calories by infusing (adding) water with cucumber slices, cranberries, sliced oranges or other fruit



Many holiday drinks are higher in calories and sugar. Alcohol also adds calories. Limit these drinks:

- eggnog: 1 cup (250 mL) has about 235–350 calories and about 6 tsp (30 mL) sugar
- hot chocolate: 1 cup (250 mL) has about 150–250 calories and about 5 tsp (25 mL) sugar
- pop, iced tea or fruit punch: 1 cup (250 mL) has about 90–120 calories and about 6 tsp (30 mL) sugar
- wine: 5 oz (150 mL) has about 100 calories and depending on type 0–3 tsp (0–15 mL) sugar
- liquor: 1½ oz (45 mL) has about 100 calories and no sugar
- beer: 12 oz (341 mL) bottle has about 100–150 calories
- wine or vodka cooler: 12 oz (341 mL) bottle has about 175–210 calories and about 4–6 tsp (20–30 mL) sugar
- liqueur: 1½ oz (45 mL) has about 150 calories and 2–3 tsp (10–15 mL) sugar

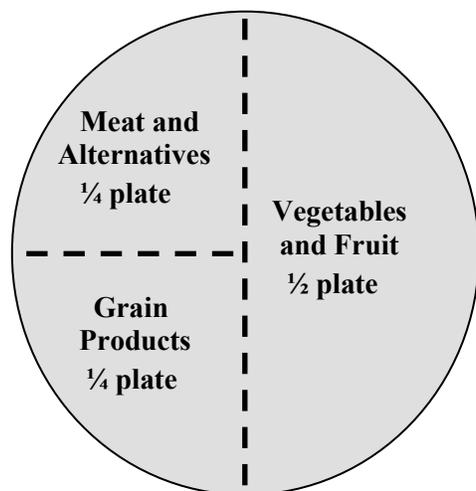
Build a healthy plate

You can enjoy holiday foods without giving up healthy eating. Try to build a healthy plate even at a party. Start with a smaller plate if possible, to help you keep your portions smaller.

- Fill at least $\frac{1}{2}$ of your plate with vegetables and fruit. They are higher in fibre so keep you full longer. These foods are also lower in calories.
- Fill $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate with grains. Choose whole grains more often (for example, brown rice, whole wheat pasta).
- Fill $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate with meat or alternatives. Make healthy choices such as fish, lean cuts of meat, or meat alternatives (beans, lentils or tofu).



This is what a healthy plate looks like:



If you have a large plate, fill only the middle area.

Eat slowly

Take time to enjoy your food. Eating slowly will help you feel full and can keep you from over eating. Before going back for more, drink a glass of water or wait 20 minutes to see if you are really hungry. If you are still hungry, choose a lower calorie food like vegetables or fruit.

Practice saying, “No, thank-you”

You might feel pressure to eat food that the host has prepared. Learn to say “no, thank you, I’m full” when someone invites you to eat more. Keep some food on your plate and your glass half full to avoid pressure to eat and drink more. Instead of a second drink of alcohol or punch, refill your glass with water or club soda.

Bring along healthy options

Offer to bring dishes that have less added fat and less added sugar to parties. If you bring dessert, try a fruit tray. Your host and guests may welcome some healthy options.

Take charge in the kitchen

Do yourself and your guests a favour by making a few healthy changes when preparing foods by:

- cutting back on the number of dishes you serve
- reducing the fat, salt, and sugar in your favourite and new recipes
- using healthier cooking methods, such as baking and grilling with little or no added fat
- making enough to last the holiday not longer

Offer guests tasty snacks that are healthy:

- open-faced mini sandwiches on whole grain bread
- peeled, unbreaded shrimp with cocktail sauce
- reduced fat cheese and whole grain crackers
- vegetables and dips such as hummus or tzatziki
- a fruit platter
- baked whole grain tortilla or pita chips with salsa



Use leftovers

Sometimes you end up with extra food after a party. Offer your guests a plate of food to take home for a meal or snack the next day. Party foods make great meals the day after:

- use leftover turkey in sandwiches with whole grain bread, tomato, and spinach
- add leftover raw or cooked vegetables to spaghetti sauce or soup
- combine extra cut-up fruit with low fat yogurt and high fibre cereal



Carry on with active living



- Stay active over the holidays. Try to do some type of physical activity every day.
- Get your family active after a meal or snack. Take a walk, play in the park, ride a bike, toboggan, or go ice skating.
- Even if you are active only 10 minutes at a time, it still counts towards the 150 minutes you need each week!
- See the guidelines on the Public Health Agency of Canada website www.publichealth.gc.ca. Search “get active tip sheets”.

Keep in mind...

- Focus on the party or event rather than the food.
- Start a journal to keep track of your eating and activity during the holidays.
- The best plan is to eat healthy and be active all year long.

For more healthy eating tips and recipes visit: www.healthyeatingstartshere.ca