

November 2023

Healthy holiday hacks to maintain weight



Healthy Lifestyle Choices

'Tis the season for family, festivity, and food. Added weight gain can easily creep up during the holidays if you don't have a plan in place. This doesn't mean you have to avoid all the foods you love during this time of the year. If you are mindful about food choices and portions, your favorite foods can avoid the naughty list.

Here are a few tips for healthy seasonal eating:

Prepare

- Make a meal plan.
- Write a grocery list and make sure it's filled with plenty of fresh or frozen produce.
- Prepare healthy snacks you can enjoy when cravings hit.

Choose healthy swaps

- Use pumpkin or applesauce instead of oil in baked goods.
- Use low-fat dairy instead of full-fat dairy in holiday dips.
- Choose reduced-fat or fat-free cheeses for salads and casseroles.

Manage portions

- Don't arrive at holiday gatherings hungry. You're more likely to overeat if you do.
- Grab a smaller sized plate. Fill it with fruits and veggies first.
- Instead of filling your plate to the brim, take smaller, bite-sized portions of your holiday favorites.

Eat wisely

- Stop eating when you are full.
- It takes about 20 minutes for your brain to realize you're full, so eat slowly and mindfully.
- Socialize away from the food tables to reduce unconscious nibbling.

Be a healthy trendsetter

- Eat clean! Make roasted sweet potatoes instead of candied yams.
- Bring a healthy dish to a potluck.
- Share your healthy meal plans and recipes with family and friends.

The spirit of the season is not about overindulging. It is about being present during each moment and enjoying life with those you love. Fill your life with happiness by making healthy choices as you enjoy your seasonal traditions.



Coping with holiday stress

Balancing the demands of the season may contribute to feelings of stress and being overwhelmed. Here are a few ways you can cope:



Pace yourself. Do not take on more responsibilities than you can handle.



Make a list and prioritize the important activities. This can help make holiday tasks more manageable.



Spend time with supportive and caring people.



Make time for yourself!

Sources: [EatRight.org](https://www.eatright.org), [MayoClinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org), [ClevelandClinic.org](https://www.clevelandclinic.org)
Consult your healthcare provider before beginning a new diet.

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Healthier holidays in 1-2-3!

Give yourself the gift of good health this holiday season. Incorporate one or more of these tips to stay focused on healthy living throughout the holidays.

1. Keep moving.

Physical activity is your secret holiday weapon. It can reduce stress and burn those extra calories you may consume. Here are a few simple ways to add more movement to your busy day during the holidays:

- Break up physical activity into smaller chunks, like walking 10 minutes several times each day.
- When shopping, park farther away from store entrances, and walk briskly to your destination. Walk a few quick laps around the shopping center before going into any stores.
- Take the stairs at every opportunity. Look for stairs in parking garages, offices, and shopping centers. If you can't climb the stairs all the way to where you're going, take the elevator part of the way, and then take the stairs the rest of the way.

2. Plan activities that don't involve eating.

Think about shifting the focus away from food during the holiday season. Consider creating new holiday tradition instead. The possibilities are endless, but here are a few ideas:

- Take a group walk during holiday gatherings. You can make the walk more fun by turning it into a scavenger hunt. You can go caroling or check out the neighborhood holiday light displays.
- Volunteer in your community; it might turn into an activity you enjoy year-round.
- Try a seasonal activity such as ice skating, tubing, sledding, or winter hiking.



3. Schedule down time.

Scheduling time for self-care every day can help you manage stress and get your energy back for the next celebration. Going out more and staying out later may also cut into your sleep time. Sleep loss can make it harder to manage your weight, and when you're sleep deprived, you tend to crave more high-fat, high-sugar foods. Here are a few tips to ensure you are getting plenty of rest:

- Aim for 7 to 8 hours of sleep per night.
- Add self-care rituals to your schedule to ensure you have time to relax.
- Follow a consistent sleep routine and schedule.

Source: [CDC.org](https://www.cdc.org), [EatRight.org](https://www.eatright.org)

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Mindful eating exercise

Consider trying this **PAUSE** exercise to implement mindful eating during your meals this season. This is an acronym that can help you understand how you're feeling during meals.

Put on the brakes for a moment and set your fork down.

Assess your hunger level on a scale of 1 to 10.

Understand what your body wants and needs.

Slow down before responding.

Entertain your options.

Source: [ClevelandClinic.org](https://www.clevelandclinic.org)