

10 TIPS

for a healthful holiday

Follow these 10 suggestions to celebrate the season and enjoy your favorite foods while staying on top of your diabetes.

by MADHU GADIA, M.S., R.D., CDE
illustrator: ED FOTHERINGHAM



Relax and enjoy

Focus on the activities instead of the food. A party is a great place to meet people and catch up on news. Distance yourself from the buffet table so you're not tempted to nibble.



Stick to your schedule

Missing a meal isn't wise, especially for people with diabetes. Your blood glucose can get out of control. If the party doesn't fit your meal or snack schedule, eat something small at your usual time and supplement lightly at the party.

Plan ahead

A little planning can save you time and energy, as well as help you keep your diabetes on track. If you're cooking, plan menus and have ingredients on hand to save time. For busy shopping days, prepare quick, simple meals such as soups and sandwiches or use frozen entrées and bagged salads. If you're attending a party or family dinner, ask questions before you go. The more you know about what's being served, the better you can plan for good diabetes management.

Size matters

Dish up your food on a salad or snack plate if one is available. Select one to three of your favorite items in small portions and savor each bite. If you want more, wait at least 20 minutes, then decide whether you're actually hungry or just craving more food. You can eat almost anything in small quantities.

Continued on page 42

Choose wisely

If you're the host, offer a variety of low-fat, low-calorie foods, such as fruit and vegetable trays, and sugar-free beverages, along with traditional options.

Cook the appropriate amount of food. If you're expecting 12 guests, don't prepare for 50 people—too many leftovers invites excess eating. When you're the guest, ask if you can bring a dish.

Trim fat and sugar

Reduce the fat in your traditional family favorites by substituting a lower-fat product or using less sugar.

For example, you can substitute fat-free milk, light cream cheese, or light sour cream in many dishes without sacrificing flavor. You can also cut down on the sugar in some recipes or use sugar substitutes. "You might be able to reduce the sugar and/or fat by one-fourth or more in some recipes and still have an excellent product," says Laura Marzen, R.D., *Diabetic Living's* Test Kitchen nutrition specialist.



Be realistic

This may not be the ideal time for you to start a weight-loss program. But you can aim to maintain your weight and keep your diabetes under control. Help yourself to succeed with positive and specific self-talk. For example, if you tell yourself you'll eat only half a slice of apple pie at Christmas dinner and pass on potatoes, you're more likely to follow through than if you plan to totally skip dessert.



Think before you drink

Choose calorie-free beverages, such as water with lemon, diet soft drinks, club soda, or mineral water. Punch, eggnog, and alcoholic drinks are loaded with calories that can add up fast. For example, one cup of eggnog contains about 340 calories and 35 grams of carbohydrates.

Make time for exercise

When you're busy with holiday activities, you may be tempted to skip your workout. But don't fall into that trap. Exercise can help you manage your hunger, burn calories, reduce stress, and control your blood glucose. In the long run, you'll have more energy, accomplish more, and enjoy the holidays more if you stay active.

Stay in control

Make sure you continue to check your blood glucose levels and take your medications as prescribed. Holiday parties, stress, and irregular schedules can cause your blood glucose to be erratic. By monitoring yourself closely, you can adjust your diabetes medications, activities, and food choices as needed. When your blood glucose is in good control, you'll feel better and enjoy the festivities more. 