

Healthy eating (and drinking) tips for the holidays

Health Engagement and Wellness Services

The holidays are a time of year when celebrations center around food, sweet treats are readily available at home and in the workplace, and overindulging might even be encouraged. Here are some tips to eat mindfully while enjoying the celebrations.

- **Eat something before you go.** One of the biggest mistakes is to not eat before an event in the hopes of “saving up” calories. But when you show up starved, everything looks good and you are much more likely to overeat and overdrink.
- **Eat foods that are special to the holidays.** Before you pick up a plate or glass, take a look at what is available and decide what looks most appealing. Use the opportunity to try new things or foods you rarely get to have — after all, you can have potato chips and dip any time of year. This way, your time is spent eating and drinking what you really enjoy. And if you don’t like the taste of something, don’t eat it.
- **Use a small plate, and fill it only once.** Enjoy holiday foods in smaller portions. You’re likely to fill up your plate at the holiday buffet; using a smaller one will help you rein in the portion size and avoid the “my eyes were bigger than my stomach” phenomenon.
- **Bring a dish you’ll feel good about eating.** You can’t control what other people bring to a holiday potluck, but you can make sure to have a healthy option by bringing one yourself. Get creative and find a new healthy recipe. One good resource is kp.org/recipes.
- **Incorporate activity.** Start a new holiday tradition. Take time with your family and friends to walk, dance, skate, ski, and sled together. Incorporating more activity can help you feel more connected with your body, which can inspire choices that feel good.
- **Eat with awareness.** The more aware you are of the colors, shapes, sizes, aromas, textures, and flavors, the more satisfied you’ll feel. Chew your bites slowly to savor and appreciate the food.
- **Stand away from the food and the bar.** If you socialize around the buffet table or the bar, you are much more likely to eat and drink things you don’t even want, and to have more than you have room for. Take your food and drink and move to another spot.
- **Time when to have a drink.** Alcohol consumption can be tricky, and it can be hard to have just one. Try starting with water and hold off on the glass of wine until later in the evening.
- **Watch for H.A.L.T.** — take time for slowing down and resting.

And finally, remember what is most important to you about the holidays. It probably isn’t just the food. Focus on what you are grateful for and the good that is evident in your life.

Happy holidays!