

How to eat healthy at holiday parties

Many people find that the holidays ruin their healthy eating plans. The sweet and high-calorie foods at family gatherings and parties can be hard to resist. After all, that pumpkin pie topped with whipped cream only comes once a year. Despite the many temptations, you can learn how to eat less. And, you can still enjoy your holiday favorites without eating too much or feeling guilty later.

TRY THESE TACTICS THE NEXT TIME YOU HEAD TO A HOLIDAY DINNER OR PARTY:



DON'T GO TO THE PARTY HUNGRY.

If you are faced with a table of goodies and you're starving, it can be hard to control your eating. Before you go to the party, have a serving of fresh vegetables like carrots, broccoli or a greens salad. Make it a low-calorie snack so your stomach is partially full by eating only a few calories.



GET WATER RIGHT AWAY. Drinking water before your meal will help you slow down your eating and may help you to feel fuller, sooner. Then, move away from the food table and socialize with other guests for a while before making food choices.



START WITH A SMALL PLATE. Rather than fill up a larger plate with lots of foods, use a smaller plate. Then, fill it with portions that are smaller than you would normally eat. You can always go back later for seconds if you're still hungry.



EAT SLOWLY. Take sips of water with every few bites. Put your fork down and socialize during the middle of your meal. Chew each bite well and enjoy how it tastes before you swallow.



LISTEN TO YOUR BELLY. When you feel almost full, that's the time to stop eating. It takes time for your stomach to tell your brain that you're full. Chances are, you will be very full in a few minutes.



ALLOW YOURSELF A SPECIAL TREAT. If you really want that brownie, have it. But, take a small piece and enjoy it. A few bites can be just as satisfying as a big portion — without the guilt.

If you do eat too much at a party this holiday season, don't give up on your healthy eating goals. Everyone has slip-ups on diets once in a while. Consider it as a lesson learned or a minor setback. Come up with a plan to eat healthier at your next party. You can start fresh tomorrow!

Sources: United States Department of Agriculture, Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics