

Good Cheer for Holiday Dieting



Big holiday coming up? Don't panic. With a good game plan and strategic planning you and your diet can not only survive holidays but you can actually thrive on them. Holidays do not have to be a time of feast or famine—you can strike a happy balance between gorging and self-sacrifice.

- Review your eating habits from the previous year's celebration. Does food take center stage at Thanksgiving, Christmas, Fourth of July, and other big holidays? Do you genuinely enjoy foods like fruitcake, for example, or do you just eat them out of custom and tradition?
- Decide which customary holiday food habits you could easily change. (If you like to cook out for the Fourth of July, for example, consider barbecued chicken without skin instead of hot dogs.)
- Before digging in at a big holiday feast, imagine how you will feel after eating it. Visualize the bloated, uncomfortable, and guilty feelings you've experienced on past occasions.
- Forget about being "perfect" on holidays. Stringent dieting may be unrealistic and you could sabotage your efforts by setting standards that are too high. Don't set yourself up for failure by only thinking of what you can't have. Concentrate instead on what is available on your diet plan.
- Learn to be festive without depending on alcohol. A drink here, a toast there—the calories of alcohol can add up. Substitute club soda or mineral water for alcohol.
- If you're invited to someone's home for dinner, ask if you can contribute a dish, then make it low-calorie. (And be sure to make plenty. Low-calorie foods are usually very popular.)
- Remember that the major purpose of the holidays is to enjoy family and friends. Food and alcohol are secondary factors.