

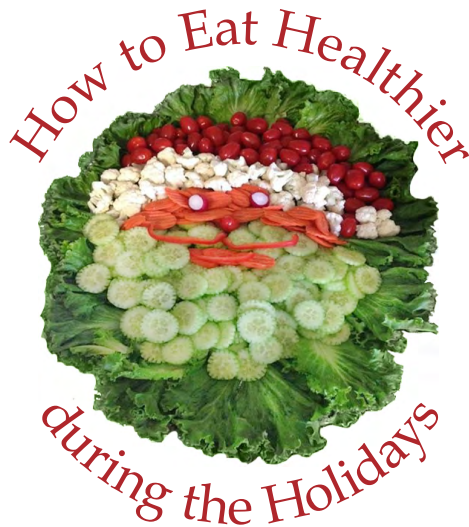
Q. How can I eat healthier during the holidays?

A. It's about to begin. You know...the next couple of months packed with more parties, treats, and dining out than usual. It's the holiday season.

If you're not paying attention to what you eat, it's all too easy to gain weight between now and New Year's. In fact, a recent study found that the average adult gains 1 to 2 pounds during the holiday season.¹

That might not sound like a lot. But gaining a little weight every year can put your health at risk. It's one reason about 72 percent of adults are overweight or obese.² Here are some ways to eat healthier and manage your weight during the holidays:

- 1. Step on the scale.** It's a great place to start. Weigh yourself before the holidays begin. Set a goal to maintain instead of gain. A recent study found that a daily weigh-in can help you maintain your weight or even lose a few pounds during the holidays.³ When you weigh yourself daily, you're more likely to be mindful of your food choices.
- 2. Drink more water.** It's zero calories. The other drinks at the holiday party aren't. A single glass of eggnog is 300 to 500 calories. Fruit punch and soft drinks have 115 to 150. A classic alcoholic drink, 150 to 225. Your body needs water to stay hydrated and support digestion, brain function, movement, and more. Avoid or limit other kinds of drinks.



3. Focus on fruits and vegetables.

You're at the holiday buffet or party table...what should you do? Fill your plate with fruits and vegetables first. They're nutrient dense and lower in calories than desserts and dishes made with sugar, cream, or sauces. If you're asked to bring some food to the holiday party, skip the cookies and treats. Instead, bring fresh fruit or vegetables with hummus.

- 4. Cook healthy food at home.** You could go out to eat with family and friends to celebrate. But you're more likely to overeat. A survey of 364 different restaurant meals found that the average dining-out meal contains 1,500 calories.⁴ Add drinks, appetizers, and desserts, and one meal contains more calories than most adults need in a day.

Instead, cook healthy food and meals at home more often during the holidays. Your menu should include foods like fruits, vegetables, whole-grain bread or pasta, nuts and seeds, and legumes.

ASK THE Wellness DOCTOR

5. Keep track of what you eat

during the holidays with your smart phone. Food diary or calorie-counter mobile apps make it easy to set a daily calorie goal and keep track of what you eat. Research shows you're more likely to make better food choices, maintain your weight, or even lose weight, when you do this.⁵

For most people and cultures, celebrating the holidays includes eating good food. You should enjoy it, but not overdo it. Start the holidays with a plan to make better food choices and stick to it. You feel better, be healthier, and have another reason to celebrate.

References

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- Veggie Santa designed by Shari Ferrier, Wellsource Executive Assistant