

Living **50** Plus in *Cottage Grove*

Healthy Holidays

Managing diabetes during the holiday season

The holiday season is synonymous with many things, including food. Family gatherings and holiday office parties wouldn't be the same without great food.

Food plays such a significant role during the holiday season that many people are worried about overindulging. Some celebrants can afford to overindulge, while others must resist temptation. Diabetics fall into the latter category, as the festive mood of the season does not mean people with diabetes can throw dietary caution to the wind. With the holiday season upon us, diabetics can heed the following tips from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to help them stay on a healthy track.

- **Stick to your normal routine.** While the holiday season can be unpredictable, the CDC advises diabetics stick to their normal routines as closely as possible. Because holiday guests cannot control food served to them at family gatherings or parties, the CDC recommends diabetics offer to bring a healthy, diabetic-friendly dish along to any parties. In addition, don't skip meals during the day in anticipation of a large holiday meal. Doing so makes it hard to control blood sugar levels.
- **Be extra careful with alcohol.** Alcohol is served or readily available at many holiday gatherings, and many people overindulge because of the festive mood of the season. Overindulging in alcohol is dangerous for anyone, but diabetics must be especially mindful of their alcohol

consumption. Alcohol can lower blood sugar and interact with diabetes medicines. Diabetics who want to enjoy a holiday libation should keep their alcohol consumption to a minimum.

- **Eat slowly.** Eating slowly can benefit anyone during the holiday season. Eating at a leisurely pace gives diners' brains ample time to signal that their bodies are full. By eating quickly, diners may be eating more calories than they hoped to eat, and that can lead to uncomfortable feelings of fullness after a meal. Diabetics who can slow down their eating are less likely to overindulge in less healthy holiday foods that can affect their blood sugar levels.
 - **Remain active.** The holiday season can be hectic, as adults often must juggle extraordinarily busy social schedules with the responsibilities of everyday life. Many people sacrifice time at the gym to ease the burden of hectic holiday schedules, but diabetics must resist that temptation. The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases notes that routine physical activity helps diabetics keep their blood glucose levels in their target range. Physical activity also helps the hormone insulin absorb glucose into all of the body's cells for energy. That extra energy boost can help diabetics fend off holiday-related fatigue.
- Diabetics face a lot of temptation come the holiday season. But with the right plan of action in place, men and women with diabetes can enjoy a healthy holiday season.



Strategies to avoid holiday weight gain

Staying fit during the holiday season can be quite challenging, even for the most ardent fitness enthusiasts and disciplined calorie-counters. Between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day, many people are offered a wide assortment of foods, beverages and other indulgences — typically in mass quantities.

According to researchers at Stanford University, although the average person only gains around one pound during the holiday season, quite frequently that pound sticks around, and those extra pounds add up year after year. As a result, it doesn't take too many years of holiday bundt cakes to gain a considerable amount of weight.

Holiday season weight gain is not unique to the United States and Canada. Investigators at Tampere University of Technology in Finland tracked weight gained in the United States, Germany and Japan during those countries' festive times and found that each country's participants gained weight, particularly during the holiday season. Annual holiday weight gain can contribute to weight-based problems such as obesity, heart disease and Type 2 diabetes.

The holiday season might not be the best time to start a diet, but holiday eating does not have to derail healthy lifestyles. The following are ways to avoid holiday weight gain and still enjoy all of the parties, adventures and time spent with friends and family.

- **Focus on festivity instead of food.** When hosting holiday festivities, make the bulk of the celebration about an activity rather than food. If guests are focused on fun, such as a sing-a-long, dancing or tree-trimming, they may be less likely to overeat.
- **Don't show up starving.** Eat a light, healthy snack before participating in any holiday revelry. Hunger pangs may drive one straight to the buffet table.
- **Survey your options prior to eating.** Guests should scope out the food choices and then make the smartest selections possible. Avoid creamy sauces, greasy foods and those that are heavy on cheese. Fill up on vegetables and then you won't feel bad about splurging on a dessert.
- **Go sparingly on alcohol.** People seldom realize how quickly calories from beverages can add up. A 12-ounce glass of

beer has about 150 calories, a five ounce glass of red wine has about 125 calories and a 1.5-ounce shot of gin, rum, vodka, whiskey, or tequila has about 100 calories, according to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Furthermore, alcohol lowers inhibitions, so you may be more likely to overindulge in more spirits or extra food when intoxicated.

- **You can't buy back calories with exercise.** Putting in a marathon exercise session the next day probably will not undo the damage done from overeating the night before. Maintain a consistent workout schedule all through the holidays.

Holiday weight gain is not inevitable for those who take control and exercise discipline.



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