

## Holiday Eating Without Guilt

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It's that time of year again! Are you ready? It can be a stressful time of year, especially for those trying to lose weight or improve their blood labs. This is the time of year I remind my clients of a national campaign that's been around a while and I really find it helps remove some pressure. The idea is to "maintain or gain no more than 2 pounds" over the holiday season. It keeps the goal realistic rather than trying to lose weight and deprive yourself over the holiday, but you still have to be mindful with your food choices to avoid gaining 5 or 10 pounds pretty quickly.

Here are some guidelines to enjoy a guiltless holiday:

1. **Don't deprive yourself during the holidays**—this can lead to deprivation-driven eating where binges can occur. It's the holidays! Enjoy food, drink, family, friends, and fun. Allow yourself to have some indulgent foods but cutting back on portions or choosing only those foods you really love means you aren't disappointed with the foods but yet you get to taste all the foods that are meaningful to you. The more indulgent the food, aim to share it with more people or choose smaller portions—think sample plate or reception plate size.
2. **Make your splurges splurge-worthy**—don't waste calories on foods you are only lukewarm about or foods that are not satisfying. Rein it in at least 50-75% of the time by cutting down on portions or sharing a dessert, treat, or indulgent food or adding some vegetables here and there.
3. **Eat nutrient-dense options first**—so there's less room for the really indulgent foods, then shift to sample sizes. This allows you to try everything on the buffet table without guilt. Focus on lean proteins, vegetables, and fruits first. In fact, put those on the plate first and take up half the real estate of the plate with produce. Then sample small dollops of everything else, but don't forgo the protein. A previous article I wrote a few years ago on healthy eating had a graphic of the healthy holiday plate to help you see this visually. You can find it here: at <https://www.lovetolivewell.com/free-resources/>
4. **Add some non-food traditions to your holiday**—for so many of us it's food and watching TV the rest of the afternoon. Try some new activities like a family yard clean up day, a personal turkey trot around the neighborhood, family bowling or biking or hiking activity or something else that everyone can participate in and enjoy creating a new tradition!
5. **Boost your activity the day before and the day after** eating holiday meals. This is a health offset sure to help a little with the extra food consumed.

Recipes with a healthier take on holiday favorites can be found at <https://www.lovetolivewell.com/free-resources/>. The previous article on holiday eating (What's Your Filter for a Healthier Holiday) and the Healthy Holiday Plate graphic are also under the Free Resources page. Check out more every day recipes and videos at Denton County Healthy Happenings Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/dentoncountyfcs/>.

Make a list of all you that have to be thankful for this holiday season. It's a nice time to re-focus on what's important in your life. Enjoy a healthy, happy, and safe holiday!

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