

Healthy Holiday Eating

Food is an important part of many holiday celebrations with family and friends. The foods served at these times can be higher in calories, fat, and/or sugar. It is also easy to overeat when there is a lot of food around. As a result, people may gain weight over the holidays.

With a little planning, you can make healthy food choices and still enjoy holiday celebrations.

Smart shopping

Start the season by shopping smart. Fill your cupboard and fridge with healthy foods using the tips below.

- Plan ahead. Create a menu and write a shopping list. A list helps you buy only what you plan to eat.
- Ask your whole family or household to help you write the menu and shopping list.
- Create a menu with lots of vegetables, fruit, whole grains, lean meats, and alternatives (legumes, tofu, eggs, nuts, and seeds). Include low fat milk and alternatives.
- Look for ways to make family favourites healthier: use less fat, sugar, or salt in recipes; use whole grain products.
- Do your shopping after a meal or snack. You are more likely to buy only what is on your shopping list when you're not hungry.
- Shop the outside aisles of the store first. Here you will find many of the healthier foods from the four food groups of Canada's Food Guide: Vegetables and Fruit, Grain Products, Milk and Alternatives, and Meat and Alternatives
- Prepare and freeze some of your holiday dishes ahead of time. This limits last minute shopping.
- Read food labels. Use the % Daily Value (% DV) on the Nutrition Facts table to compare different food products.
 - Choose foods with **less** fat, sodium and sugar
 - Choose foods with **more** fibre.
 - For each nutrient, 5% DV is a little, and 15% DV is a lot.

Your holiday shopping list

Stock up on foods such as:

- dark green vegetables like romaine lettuce, spinach, asparagus, and Brussels' sprouts
- orange vegetables such as sweet potato, squash, yams, pumpkin, and carrots
- a variety of fresh, frozen, or canned fruits
- whole grain breads and higher fibre cereals
- low fat, whole grain crackers
- low fat Milk and Alternatives - skim or 1% milk, and hard cheese with 20% milk fat (MF) or less
- turkey, chicken, or lean roasted meats
- lower calorie snacks such as raw vegetables, fruit, low fat yogurt, skim milk, hummus, lean deli meats

Holiday eating tips

1) Eat three meals per day

Plan to eat regularly, even on a party day. Skipping meals can make you very hungry, and more likely to overeat at the party. If the event starts late, have a small snack (for example, yogurt and a piece of fruit) in the late afternoon.

2) Limit some appetizers

Many of these small bites are high in calories and fat. It is easy to eat a full meal's worth of calories from appetizers alone. For example, 2 chicken wings, 2 sausage rolls, and 1 mini quiche have the same calories as a healthy meal. The problem is that appetizers are often eaten as extras on top of calories from your regular meals.

Visit with friends away from the appetizer or food table. Choose a few items that you enjoy, and leave the rest. Drink water or chew gum to help avoid overeating.

3) Choose healthy drinks

The healthiest drinks are water, low fat milk, and 100% juice. Limit juice to ½ cup (125 mL) per day.

Many holiday drinks are high in sugar and calories. Limit these drinks:

- eggnog: 1 cup (250 mL) has about 235 to 350 calories
- hot chocolate: 1 cup (250 mL) has about 150 to 250 calories
- pop, iced tea or fruit punch: 1 cup (250 mL) has about 90 to 120 calories

Alcohol may add to the festive mood but it also adds a lot of calories:

- wine (5 oz or 150 mL) or liquor (1½ oz or 45 mL): about 100 calories
- beer: a 12 oz can (355 mL) has about 150 calories

To limit the calories from drinks at a holiday event:

- choose black coffee, tea or herbal tea with 1% milk
- use flavoured coffee beans instead of adding flavoured creamers
- try a wine spritzer (½ white wine and ½ club soda) for half the calories
- try a light beer
- mix a drink with diet pop

4) Build a healthy plate

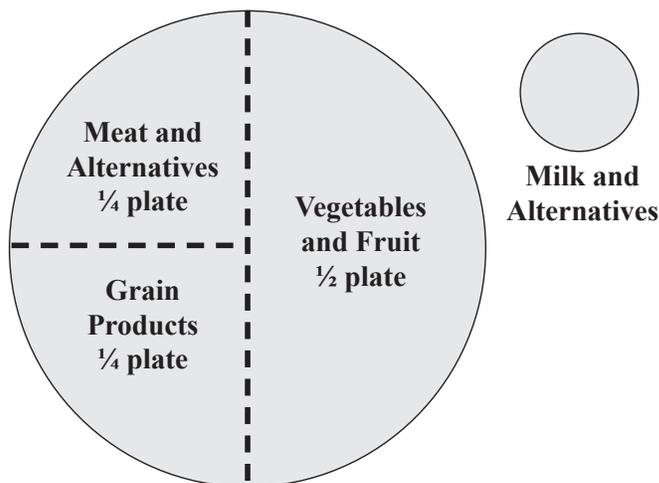
You can enjoy special foods without giving up healthy eating. Try to build a healthy plate even at a party.

Choose a small plate, if possible, to help you keep your portions smaller.

- Fill at least ½ of your plate with vegetables and fruit. They are high in fibre so they keep you full longer. They are also low in calories.

- Fill ¼ of your plate with grains. Choose whole grains more often (for example, brown rice, whole wheat pasta).
- Fill ¼ of your plate with meat or alternatives. Make healthy choices such as fish, lean cuts of meat, or meat alternatives (beans, lentils or tofu).
- Complete your meal with a serving of milk and alternatives such as low fat milk, fortified soy beverage, or yogurt for dessert.

This is what a healthy plate looks like:



If you have a large plate, fill only the middle area.

5) Eat slowly

Take time to enjoy your meal. Eating slowly will help you feel full and can keep you from over eating. If you want to go back for more, drink a glass of water or wait 20 minutes to see if you are really hungry. If you are still hungry choose a lower calorie food like vegetables or fruit.

6) Practice saying, “no, thank-you”

You might feel pressure to eat food that the host has prepared. Learn to say “no, thank you, I’m full” when someone invites you to eat more. Keep some food on your plate and keep your glass half full to avoid pressure to eat and drink more. Instead of a second drink of alcohol or punch, refill your glass with low calorie mixer like club soda.

7) Bring along healthy options

Offer to bring dishes that are low fat or unsweetened to parties. If you bring dessert, try a fruit tray instead of a higher fat dessert. Your host and guests may welcome some healthy options.

8) Take charge in the kitchen

If you are hosting, do your guests a favour by making a few healthy changes:

- cut down on the number of dishes you serve
- cut back on the fat, salt, and sugar in your recipes
- choose healthier cooking methods, such as baking and grilling with little or no added fat
- cook or bake enough to last the holiday—not longer

Offer your guests tasty snacks:

- open-faced mini sandwiches on whole grain bread
- peeled, unbreaded shrimp with cocktail sauce
- low fat cheese and low fat, whole grain crackers
- vegetables and dips such as hummus or tzatziki
- fruit platters
- baked whole grain tortilla or pita chips with salsa

9) Use leftovers

Don't feel that you need to eat all the party food on the day of the party. Party foods make great meals the day after:

- add leftover turkey to a sandwich with whole grain bread, tomato, and spinach
- add leftover cooked vegetables to spaghetti sauce or soup
- use extra cut-up fruit in low fat yogurt

Carry on with active living

- Stay active over the holidays. Try to do some kind of physical activity every day.
- The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines suggest that adults get 150 minutes of physical activity every week. Even if you can do only 10 minutes at a time, it still counts!

See the guidelines on the Public Health Agency of Canada website www.publichealth.gc.ca. Search “get active tip sheets”.

- Get your family active after a meal or snack. Take a walk, play in the park, ride a bike, or go ice skating.
- Give a gift for better health: gym passes, exercise videos, a pedometer, or light weights.
- Check local recreation centres for free admission days.

Keep in mind...

- Focus on the party rather than the large amounts of food.
- Start a journal to keep track of your eating and activity during the holidays.
- The best plan is to eat healthy and be active all year long. Happy Holidays!

Recipes

Pita Chips

8	whole wheat pita bread	8
1 Tbsp	oil	15 mL
1/8 tsp	garlic powder	0.5 mL

Cut pita bread into wedges. Brush lightly with oil and sprinkle with garlic powder. Bake at 350 °F (180 °C) for 10 minutes until crisp.

Hummus Dip

16 oz	can chick peas, drained and rinsed (no salt added)	437 mL
2–4 cloves	garlic	2–4 cloves
2–3 Tbsp	olive oil or tahini	30–45 mL
3 Tbsp	lemon juice	45 mL

Rinse chickpeas in water. Crush garlic and place in bowl with all other ingredients. Mash with wooden spoon or use a blender. If the dip is too thick, add water until you get the texture you want.

Baked Apples

2	cooking apples, medium	2
1 tsp	margarine	5 mL
2 Tbsp	brown sugar, packed	30 mL
1/4 tsp	cinnamon	1 mL
1/4 tsp	lemon juice	1 mL
1 Tbsp	raisins	15 mL
1/8 tsp	nutmeg	0.5 mL

Remove the apple core, cutting from the top of the apple. Do not cut through the bottom. Prick the apples with a fork. In a small bowl, mix together the other items and spoon into the centres of the apples. Place apples on a dish and microwave them on high for 1½ minutes or until the apples are tender.

You can also place the apples in a baking pan with 2 Tbsp (30 mL) of water and bake at 350 °F (180 °C) for 30 minutes.

For more healthy eating tips and recipes visit www.healthyalberta.ca.