

Mindful Holiday Eating

By Rebecca Morley, MA

When it comes to resisting holiday fare, the key words are mindful eating. Treating yourself on occasion won't do harm to your overall health, but if you mindlessly say yes to everything offered, your weight may suffer. Holidays elevate feasting to a special status, and tempt us to stuff ourselves. Splurging during the holidays with the promise of healthier eating in the New Year didn't work for the participants in a New England Journal of Medicine study. Folks in the study were told to not worry about food intake during this season. After the holidays, they estimated gaining almost four pounds. The weight gained persisted despite their best intentions to lose it quickly. This highlights the importance of mindful food choices during the holidays. A study reported in the [International Journal of Obesity](#) suggests that consistent eating from day to day substantially increases the odds of controlling your weight.

Fortunately, watching your waistline during the season doesn't mean you have to give up all your favorite festive foods. Be choosy and pick those foods you really enjoy. Skip the routine fare like rolls and butter to save calories. Don't feel pressured to try everything. There is something so nourishing about warm apple crisp or spiced pumpkin pie around this time of year. Grab a slice and enjoy it! Avoiding something you love and want to savor, only to binge on it later, when no one is around, takes the fun out of enjoying your food.



Resist hanging around the snack foods. Out of site-out of mind! Part of being a mindful eater is building self awareness around hunger and satiety cues. Leave space on your plate between foods so that they retain their individual appeal. Resist mile-high piling. Portion control is crucial! If you're still hungry after savoring your food, you can always go back for more. Take a break between eating to socialize. If you've ever tried to do both at the same time, you know it distracts you from really enjoying what you're eating and often traps you into over-doing it.

Instead of bringing more food to an over-stuffed holiday buffet, help the host set-up or clean up. Your assistance will be appreciated and remembered long after the party is done. Freeze or give away leftovers to help limit overeating. As the hostess, reduce cooking, serving a few elegant holiday favorites instead of a huge feast that leaves you exhausted.

Keep nutrition in mind. Fill-up on high-fiber, nutrient rich foods. Harvard Medical School states that food works as [preventive medicine](#). Eating the nutrients you need will keep you healthier and increase your energy during the festive holiday season. If you're the cook, prepare tasty dishes replete with vegetables, fruits, whole grains and aromatic spices. These dishes will add to the health as well as enjoyment of the season. It's not the quantity of the food, but the quality of your interactions with friends and family that makes your holiday celebrations memorable.

