

Healthy Holidays

The start of a new year often means the start of new habits. A healthy diet and regular physical activity can easily be achieved by making some of these easy, conscious decisions.

Family, fun...and food! It's what the holidays are all about, right? But that doesn't mean you have to pack on the holiday pounds. Start the New Year—and the New You—off right by balancing the calories you consume with the calories you burn, and avoid any holiday weight gain. Here are some ways to help jump start your New Year's resolutions.

Take the extra calories out of cooking.

- If you're heading out to a party—holiday, birthday or any sort—eat a light, healthy snack before you go. Broth-based soups, cereal with skim milk, or just plain fruit are all good options! This will help curb your hunger and decrease your visits to the buffet table.
- Modify recipes to reduce the amount of fat and calories. For example, when making lasagna, use part-skim ricotta cheese instead of whole-milk ricotta cheese. Substitute shredded vegetables, such as carrots, zucchini, and spinach for some of the ground meat in lasagna.
- Bring a low-fat, holiday dish to the party.
- When eating or snacking in front of the TV, put the amount that you plan to eat into a bowl or container instead of eating straight from the package. It's easy to overeat when your attention is focused on something else.
- You've tried the leftover turkey sandwich, right? Now try the leftover turkey salad! Add a few pieces of turkey to a generous portion of mixed greens, tomatoes, raw broccoli, carrots, or any of your favorite vegetables. Toss with a light salad dressing and some dried cranberries for an authentic holiday taste.

Rethink your drink.

- Choose water, diet, or low-calorie beverages instead of sugar-sweetened beverages.
- For a quick, easy, and inexpensive thirst-quencher, carry a water bottle and refill it throughout the day.
- Limit your alcoholic beverage intake. Alcoholic drinks can have many calories, especially holiday favorites like eggnog. Cut or limit your alcohol calories by drinking more water.

Get active, healthy, and happy.

- Make a goal with a friend to support each other in getting active!
- Sign up for a 5K walk or run to keep your mind focused on physical activity goals. Maintain your physical activity during the holidays—better yet, try and get more active! It will make those New Year's resolutions even easier to attain.
- Find fun, creative ways your friends and family can spend time being active instead of eating. Be sure and spend time together that doesn't revolve around a meal.

Keep those resolutions all year long.

The start of a new year often means the start of new habits. Eating healthier food and becoming more physically active is often on the top of many people's list, but it's easy for these new expectations to become overwhelming. Set realistic goals for yourself this year! A healthy diet and regular physical activity can easily be achieved by making some of these easy, conscious decisions:

- **Eat breakfast every day.** When you don't eat breakfast, you are likely to make up for the calories you saved by eating more later on in the day. Choose a quick, healthy breakfast option such as yogurt with fruit or toast with sliced banana and a bit of peanut butter. Many people who maintain long-term weight loss eat breakfast daily.

- **Drink water.** Make water more appealing by keeping it cold in the fridge or adding a slice of fruit for flavor. Choosing water keeps you from drinking something else that may be loaded with calories and sugar. People who drink sugar-sweetened beverages tend to consume more calories.
- **Eat smaller food portions.** When eating out, save some of your meal and take it home to make another meal or split one meal between two people. At home, try putting only the amount you want to eat in a small bowl and don't go back for more. People eat more when confronted with larger portion sizes.
- **Maintain your physical activity routine.** Regular physical activity is an important part of maintaining weight loss. Keep up your good habits before, during, and after the New Year. If you need extra encouragement, be physically active with a friend or relative or start an activity that may have always interested you, such as gardening or bicycling.
- **Prepare a healthy lunch at home and take it to work.** Taking your lunch to work helps you avoid last-minute lunch choices, which often result in selecting high-fat and high-calorie options. Think about healthy lunches before your next trip to the grocery store, and stock up on healthy food items so that making your lunch will be easy.