

Meal Plan

How to savor and survive the holiday season with your waistline intact

BY KERRI-ANN JENNINGS

REVIEWED BY HANSA BHARGAVA, MD, WEBMD MEDICAL EDITOR

The holidays are a time to celebrate. But being in celebration mode for a month can mean letting your healthy habits slide. With these tips, you can get the most out of the holidays without a lasting, er, reminder.

Smart swaps

Instead of potatoes, use cauliflower and celery-riac—these two white, nonstarchy vegetables make great substitutions for more calorie-dense mashed potatoes. Steamed cauliflower pressed through a ricer can stand in 100% for mashed potatoes, while swapping up to half of the potatoes for flavorful celery root slashes carbs.

Instead of cream, use low-fat evaporated milk, a full-bodied stand-in for heavy cream. Try it in pumpkin pie, “creamy” casseroles, and mashed potatoes.

Instead of butter, use broth. Low-fat, low-sodium chicken or mushroom broth can infuse dishes with lots of flavor and keep them moist without adding many calories. Use broth to steam green beans, bind stuffing for stuffed mushrooms, or caramelize onions.

Dining strategies

Eat your calories, don't drink them, says Lezlie Sparks, MS, RDN, LD, a certified diabetes educator at The Medical Center of Plano in Texas. Favor calorie-free drinks, such as flavored sparkling water or unsweetened iced tea, and be mindful and moderate about alcoholic beverages.

Be realistic. This is not the time to try to lose weight or start a new strict diet. Instead, aim to maintain your weight—and remember to exercise regularly.

Eat right...most of the time. Decadent dishes stop being a treat when you have them day in and day out. Keep the majority of your November and December meals super healthy



and you'll more fully enjoy the splurges. Hearty veggie- and bean-packed stews and chili satisfy your belly (and your taste buds) for daily fare. Save richer casseroles and desserts for the truly special occasions.

Be carb conscious. Starchy foods—think stuffing, buttery Parker House rolls, sweet potato casserole—make up the bulk of holiday fare, but if you want to curb calories and carbs be selective about the ones you pile on your plate. Leave room for your favorite starches and skip the ones you're not as into.

Don't skip meals. “Saving up” for a big meal or party by skipping breakfast and lunch might seem like a smart idea, but it often backfires—you might ravenously overeat when you finally give yourself the chance, Sparks says. Instead, focus on eating regular, healthy meals, and snack on a piece of fruit or some raw veggies before going to a party.



GET MORE
healthy living
tips and info at
[webmd.com/
askthepharmacist](http://webmd.com/askthepharmacist)

This content is selected and controlled by WebMD's editorial staff and is funded by Walmart.