

Holiday eating not detrimental to good regular dietary habits

December 23 2014, by Mara Kerkez



Tis the season to attend food-filled festivities that generally tax the old waistline. If you're tired of stressing over calories and weight gain, here's a bit of advice from Peter Pribis, assistant professor of nutrition and dietetics in the University of New Mexico College of Education, Department of Individual, Family and Community Education.

"If you think about the spirit of the holidays, a lot of atmosphere and memories are created around food. Maybe your family has a special pie

or pudding recipe or other recipes that have been handed down over the years. Don't alter them, reducing this and that, trying to make them 'lite' and healthier. Make the real thing and eat less, maybe don't take seconds. Just enjoy the time," Pribis said.

According to Pribis, what really matters for overall health is what we eat and do on a daily basis. "Eating junk food everyday matters, not over-indulging on Halloween night, or Thanksgiving and Christmas day. "Instead of agonizing about [unhealthy food](#) and overeating, I say eat, and then go for a group walk or do something a bit more active later," he said.

Pribis suggests that when the holidays are over, and the New Year begins, a healthy choice would be to introduce more salads, vegetables, fruits and nuts into our general diet.

"Try to become healthier overall and realize that those few special days over the course of a year won't hurt you or add that much weight," Pribis said.

Pribis teaches "Methods in Nutrition Education" where students often confess that changing [eating habits](#) is difficult. "Some people do have unhealthy diets," Pribis said. "They eat a lot of white flour, white sugar and they're addicted to caffeine. When they make the decision to change their eating habits, they become overwhelmed. They don't know where to start. I tell them to start small. For example, if you eat bacon and eggs every morning, try eating a good cereal instead, for one day a week, then up it to two or three."

The idea is to start with one small change. When that change becomes a habit, which usually takes about six weeks, start with another habit you want to change. "You'll be surprised how, with this concept, you can change dramatically in one year. Along with that, walk more, park your

car farther and take the stairs, whatever. Slowly, people become empowered with this method," Pribis said.

Pribis does research in the area of nuts, especially walnuts, which has earned him the name "The Nutty Professor" around campus. In 2010, he conducted a study on walnuts and their effect on cognitive thinking. He hopes to conduct another in 2015 to investigate the effect of almonds on depression. It's all about nuts.

Provided by University of New Mexico

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