

Five tips for enjoying the holiday party without a guilt trip

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The countdown for the holidays is on and so is the calorie counting.

"For many, the fear of gaining [weight](#) is significantly greater than the actual number of pounds that may accrue at holiday time," said Lauren Zuro, a registered [dietitian](#) at Loyola Center for Metabolic Surgery & Bariatric Care. "Many of my patients are on long-term weight-loss programs and have become accustomed to the eating and exercise routine and the regular weigh-in that shows a loss."

Zuro prepares patients well in advance of eating events and helps tailor strategies and realistically manage expectations.

"If a patient misses a workout, attends a special dining event or gets out of their healthy comfort zone, they mistakenly feel they have not accomplished anything or that they have gained weight if they do not actually lose weight," she said. "Maintaining a weight loss, or minimizing weight gain, especially during a food-intensive, stressful time, is a major accomplishment."

Zuro regularly counsels weight-loss patients at Loyola and specializes in bariatrics, or [weight-loss](#) medicine.

Here are tips from Zuro on how you can have a good time at holiday parties without sacrificing good nutrition:

1. Never go to a holiday party hungry. You will overeat. Have a

protein-based snack (i.e., a half turkey sandwich, Greek yogurt, string cheese, quarter-cup cottage cheese and fruit) before going and this will keep you from overeating high-calorie appetizers and chips that have low nutritional value.

2. Select more vegetables and fruit options at parties. Vegetable platters are a common appetizer and fresh fruit is usually offered on dessert tables.
3. Use smaller plates (appetizer size) when selecting food items for meals. Fill your plate with "taste" amounts. This way you get a chance to try many dishes but not overconsume calories. Remember to enjoy what you are eating. Eat slowly; savor the flavors of the different dishes.
4. Consume water or other sugar-free beverages. By avoiding sugary or alcoholic drinks and high-fat beverages, such as eggnog, you will save on calories.
5. Remember the reason why you are getting together with family and friends during the [holidays](#): not to eat, but to enjoy their company and share in the ambiance of the season. Make sure to catch up with family or friends you may not be able to see often and enjoy the time you get to spend with everyone.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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