

Experts provide tips for staying on track this holiday season

December 5 2016

The last of the leaves are falling, the Halloween candy is gone, and most Americans are turning their attention toward the holiday season.

While this time of year should be about family gatherings, delicious meals and good cheer, it can create anxiety for those trying to keep their diet and exercise routine on track. According to a study in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, adults gain 1 to 2 pounds over the holidays, on average. While that amount is small, they typically don't lose it. So those few pounds can add up over time.

But the holiday season doesn't have to be a time of shame spirals. Giving a little extra thought to your eating habits and carving out a little time for movement can make the holidays manageable and enjoyable.

"The holidays can be a time of anxiety for some people, due to the frequent temptation and exposure of not-so-healthy foods," said Steven Lalevich, Healthy IU dietitian at the IU Health Center. "But with a little planning, the [holiday season](#) doesn't have to derail all the hard work you've done over the year."

Read a few tips from Lalevich, along with Mariah Deinhart and Mary Kerby, IU masters of public health students at the School of Public Health-Bloomington, for staying on track over the next few months.

- Have goals. Write down your health and nutrition goals before a holiday meal. This can help you muster the necessary willpower

to make choices that align with those goals.

- Modify your recipes. Many holiday dishes are high in calories and fat. Reduce sugar in dessert recipes by 25 to 50 percent and replace half of white flour with whole wheat flour. For ideas, read the [healthy holiday recipe booklet](#) created by Lalevich.
- Control portions. It wouldn't be the holidays without a piece of pie or cake. But watch how big your dessert portions are. Use a smaller utensil to serve desserts and a larger utensil to serve low-calorie vegetable dishes.
- Practice mindful eating. Slow down and pay attention to the experience of eating. Savoring each bite can reduce the amount of food it takes to feel satisfied.
- Get moving. Gather the family together for a walk each day, organize a family game of football or other active game, or turn up the holiday music and dance along.
- Turn a shopping trip into a workout. The holidays can involve a lot of shopping. When visiting a shopping center, park a little farther away to take more steps, take an extra lap around the mall when shopping or take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Keep the momentum going. Holiday eating habits and exercise routines are often a reflection of your habits year-round. Developing [healthy habits](#) all year makes it easier to manage during the holidays or to return to those habits after the [holidays](#).

Provided by Indiana University

Citation: Experts provide tips for staying on track this holiday season (2016, December 5) retrieved 10 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-12-experts-track-holiday-season.html>

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