

# Holidays place extra stress on people managing type 2 diabetes

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**DIABETES**



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Nearly half (49%) of people living with type 2 diabetes said managing their condition during a typical fall and winter holiday season is more difficult than other times of the year, according to a new survey for the American Heart Association and American Diabetes Association.

The online survey of more than 1,000 U.S. adults 45 and older completed by real-time market research platform Thrivable for the associations' joint Know Diabetes by Heart initiative found staying on track with health goals was the top holiday season concern among respondents (28%), followed by finances (15%) and safe gathering due to COVID-19 (14%).

Managing [diabetes](#) year-round is critical for preventing serious complications like [heart disease](#), stroke and chronic kidney disease, which are leading—and largely preventable—causes of disability and death for people living with diabetes.

Regarding nutrition, nearly three-quarters (73%) of respondents reported having a lot or complete control over their dietary choices during a normal week, compared to just over half (52%) during a holiday week, such as Christmas.

"The holidays provide challenges to staying heart healthy for many people, but especially for those managing conditions closely tied to daily nutrition, like type 2 diabetes," said Robert Eckel, M.D., FAHA, immediate past president of medicine and science for the American Diabetes Association, past president of the American Heart Association and an endocrinologist at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. "Even if you don't have diabetes yourself, it's important to create healthy environments for our friends and family members who do."

Know Diabetes by Heart Ambassadors, who share their experiences living with type 2 diabetes to help others, offer their tried-and-true tips for keeping health goals on track through the holidays.

## **Take control of the kitchen**

"I do some of the cooking for [holiday](#) meals so I know there will be something good for me to eat," said Lupe Barraza of Plano, Texas.

## **Prepare before your next holiday event**

"If I go to a party, I bring something I know I can eat or make sure the host knows my needs and has something for me," said Jane DeMeis of Fairport, New York. "If I go somewhere where I have not shared my health concerns and don't want to for some reason, I simply say I am on a diet."

Sarah Bryant of Elgin, South Carolina, said her strategy is to eat before she goes to a party. "If I'm full, it lessens my chances of eating things that are bad for me."

## **Travel smart**

"To reduce stress and stay on track when traveling, I bring along snacks and food that will keep my body happy and my health goals in check," said Annette Lartigue of Trenton, New Jersey. "Otherwise, I will over or under eat what is available and inevitably lose my ability to manage my type 2 diabetes."

Bryant recommends preparing yourself ahead of time for things you can't control while traveling and looking for a silver lining. "When I'm in a long line at the airport I'll put on my noise cancelling headphones and listen to music or podcasts I enjoy."

## **Create new healthy traditions**

"Our family has adopted a rule that we only prepare individual portions of dessert," Lartigue said. "It helps everyone eat less and feel better."

Anthony Wilson of Virginia Beach, Virginia, said exercise is on his family's menu. "We always make time to exercise after dinner. Even if it's a short walk, anything is better than nothing."

## **Make your home a safe zone**

"If it's not supposed to go in my mouth, it's not coming in my house," Lartigue said. "My will power does not need to be challenged at home."

Provided by American Heart Association

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