

Give thanks for healthy diet changes during the holidays

November 24 2023, by Robin Foster



Thanksgiving marks the start of the holiday eating season, when

everyone is constantly tempted by sweet treats, rich foods and fancy, high-calorie drinks.

But before diving into decadent eating, consider trying to make [healthy food choices](#) during the festivities, one expert suggests.

"The holidays are a time for celebration and social gatherings, delicious meals and an abundance of sweet treats. It's a time when people look forward to indulging in their favorite dishes, but also take the time to enjoy the company of treasured friends and family," said Dr. Luis Rustveld, an assistant professor of family and [community medicine](#) at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

"Spending quality time with family and friends are integral to overall well-being and [mental health](#). Starting these [healthier eating] habits during the holiday can lay the foundation for a healthier new year."

Any time of year can be a good time to adjust your diet, Rustveld noted, but the holidays may encourage more mindful eating because you can practice strategies like portion control, moderation and appreciating textures, flavors and smells of food.

Taking your time while eating to focus on these details is one way to enjoy your meal and prevent overeating, he said.

People should not deprive or limit the amount of food they eat in the days leading up to celebrations, as this may actually prompt overindulgence.

And don't forget the calories in alcohol and seasonal drinks. Alcohol is usually served up with holiday meals and should be consumed in moderation for health and [safety reasons](#), Rustveld said.

Combining these sugary beverages with desserts can have negative impacts on health. Sugar-free or sugarless substitutions for mixed drinks can counter that.

If you or a loved one has a modified diet due to [health concerns](#), Rustveld said a couple of simple strategies will guarantee holiday meals are still enjoyable.

Make holiday hosts aware of meals or ingredients you or your loved one need to avoid. You can also take matters into your own hands and bring your own version of dishes to share.

And when eating healthy, don't think of it as punishment.

"The word diet has been misused as something that refers to caloric deprivation," Rustveld said.

"When people think about 'going on a diet,' they really should be thinking about what they want to accomplish with their eating habits, like losing weight, reducing [cholesterol levels](#) or adjusting what they eat for [chronic conditions](#), then changing your current [eating habits](#) to meet those goals."

More information: Visit the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for more on [healthy eating during the holidays](#).

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