

Diabetes: Dealing With Holidays

The Challenge

Holidays can be filled with food temptations. Busy schedules make it hard to work in regular exercise and healthy meals. But don't despair. With a little planning, you can enjoy the holidays.

What You Can Do Ahead of Time

- Know your diabetic meal plan. Then you will know what and how much to eat when you are dining away from home.
- Prepare, portion, and freeze ahead of time meals that are lower in sugar, fat, and sodium. Then you can reheat them quickly when you are very busy.
- Schedule your exercise before you schedule holiday activities. Be flexible, but if you don't plan exercise time, it won't happen.
- For your own party, choose foods that fit your meal plan. Go to the library or bookstore, and get diabetes cookbooks and magazines that feature healthy holiday recipes. The American Diabetes Association Web site (www.diabetes.org) also features a new recipe each day.
- Focus on one or two diabetic self-management goals during the holidays. No one is perfect, but you can stick to one or two habits that are good for you.

What to Do When the Season Arrives

- Have active parties. Plan parties around caroling, house decorating, holiday card making, or walks to see neighborhood decorations.
- If you are invited to a party, call ahead for the menu. Offer to bring a dish that you can enjoy without guilt.
- At the buffet table, survey the offerings before you dig in. Only put on your plate what you really want. Use a small plate, and leave plenty of space around your portions. Then sit down away from the buffet table. Don't go back for seconds.
- Never drink alcohol without your doctor's permission. Insulin and some diabetes pills do not mix well with alcohol. Never have more than one or two drinks. A serving of alcohol is 1½ ounces of distilled liquor, 12 ounces of light beer, or 4 ounces of dry wine.

General Guidelines for Healthy Eating

- Roasted white meat of poultry and boiled, baked, broiled, or grilled fish or seafood are lower in fat and calories than beef or pork. If you do eat red meat, choose leaner cuts.
- Raw, steamed, grilled, stewed, or baked vegetables are lower in fat and calories than vegetable casseroles or salads made with mayonnaise. Skip the gravy and sauces, or use only a little.
- A small portion of a yeast bread or roll tends to be lower in fat and calories than quick breads like biscuits, cornbread, or nut breads.
- Watch the fats you add. One teaspoon of regular margarine or butter can add 45 calories. Use diet salad dressing, fat-free sour cream, and light margarine.
- Fruit from a fruit basket is the best dessert. If you must have a regular dessert, have a very small portion.
- Coffee and unsweetened tea are free foods. Add artificial sweetener and skim milk if needed.

Questions to Ask

1. What diabetes self-management goal will I focus on during the holidays? _____

2. What nutritious recipes can I fix ahead, so that I can eat well while I am busy? _____

3. How can I get more exercise during the holidays? _____
