

A healthy thanksgiving
by Mike DeCinti

I have found during my very short writing career that the articles I write are becoming cyclical. When summer rolls around, I write about ways to protect yourself while exercising in hot weather. Likewise, when the temperature drops I write about cold weather exercise. (By the way, I hope you all saved my article from last month like I told you too because with winter approaching, it will be very helpful.)

At Halloween and Easter I write about limiting your candy intake and of course from Thanksgiving through New Years I find myself writing about ways to stay healthy while enjoying those holiday feasts. So with Thanksgiving next week, I thought I'd give you some easy tips to follow that may save you from adding on those holiday pounds.

The first thing to remember is that you do not have to avoid holiday parties, or all you can eat buffets, you just have to demonstrate a bit of self control and make smart choices when filling your plate. As I have always told you, I believe in the idea of eating 5 to 6 small meals a day three to four hours apart as opposed to 2 or 3 larger meals. This "grazing" helps give your body the energy it needs consistently throughout the day, while helping you avoid overeating during mealtime. And of course these small meals need to be smart choices. Lean proteins, healthy carbs and low fat. Plus, they need to be the proper portion.

The following tips can be applied to most any meal any time of the year, but they can really come in handy during the holidays. Here are some simple ones to get you started.

- Eat a salad before your meal. As long as it's not loaded down with a heavy, fatty salad dressing, bacon bits, or other non-vegetables, you can't go wrong with eating a big salad. Plus, it will help you eat less of the not-so-good stuff later in the meal.
- Keep that water glass filled. Not only will drinking several glasses of cold water during your meal help you feel full, but water does so many other good things for your body it needs to be part of your everyday lifestyle.
- Finally, try going for a walk after your meals. This will help get your metabolism going and start burning off those unwanted calories that may have slipped into your holiday meal.

So, now comes the true test, what if you are in charge of cooking the holiday meal? Well here are a few tips that can help you (and your guests) enjoy the day while making healthier choices. Chances are your guests won't even notice, but if they do you can just tell them that you're doing your part to keep them healthy during the holidays.

- Don't stuff the turkey. The dressing will absorb a lot of the fat from the turkey, so try cooking the dressing by itself. And cook the turkey on a rack with a roasting

pan underneath. This will allow all of the fat top drip away from the bird. Plus, when you go to make the gravy, try skimming off the fat from the roasting pan.

- Substitute regular mashed potatoes with sweet potatoes, and mash them with evaporated skimmed milk and some chicken broth. Plus you can sweeten them with some all-natural honey.
- Instead of putting butter on your hot vegetables, try sprinkling them with a bit of salt and pepper and dill seasoning, maybe use a bit of lemon juice, or combine some orange juice and corn starch to make a glaze.
- Skip the breads. With all of the great food you're going to eat, not only are rolls and breads an unhealthy carb, but they will just fill you up and prevent you from eating healthier choices.
- Finally, try making your pumpkin pie with evaporated skimmed milk and use half the sugar and replace it with brown sugar. Plus to give it more flavor add more of the spices in the recipe and always serve it with a low-fat whipped topping.

I hope you can see that these are not drastic measures you have to take to stay healthy during the holidays, but practical recommendations that anyone can follow. Just do yourself a favor and give them a try. The worst thing you can do is ignore all advice to eat right during the holidays believing that you'll jump back into healthy eating after the holidays. Statistics show you probably won't and unfortunately you'll be worse off then before that first holiday meal.

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