

Coping with *the Holidays*

By Miriam Richter



Here we go again! The Holiday Diet Declaration: "I shall not overeat during the holidays even if it kills me!" It is difficult to maintain a healthy lifestyle when faced with those delicious goodies that you have

been craving all year long. There is no one answer to the holiday diet dilemma but planning ahead can make it a lot easier. The goal for the holiday season is to maintain your weight; this is not the time to go on a diet.

Watch excuses: "It's a special occasion that only comes once a year." Keep the number of events you attend to a minimum, the fewer parties the less the temptation to overeat, according to nutritionist Alice Lindeman. Arrive at parties late when the high calorie, high fat foods will be gone. Head right for the veggies! Filling up on veggies and water or a low calorie beverage can reduce cravings later. Watch the alcoholic drinks, they are high in "empty" calories that can stimulate the urge to overeat, Lindeman says. She recommends holding a low carb drink throughout the party, which also keeps snacking to a minimum. If you do imbibe take a glass of water

between drinks, it will pace you, dilute the alcohol and fill your stomach so that you do not drink or eat as much.

OK, there is that one special party that you have been looking forward to all year long and you don't want to be constantly on "diet duty". What can you do? One strategy is to "bank" your calories. This does not mean starving yourself the day of the event. Eat lighter, lower calorie meals that day, or even several days before so that you have extra calories in the "bank" to enjoy that pumpkin soufflé that you have been craving. Another strategy is to eat only those special holiday treats and avoid the foods you can eat throughout the year such as nuts or chips. Add an extra workout session to help burn additional calories.

Excuse: "I will go back to healthy eating tomorrow." Great if you can stick with it. Watch out that the one party does not become "The Endless Splurge". Don't skip your exercise; even if you cannot get to the gym go for a walk or run.

If you are the host (or hostess) you can serve your guests "treats" that are lower in calories and fat but are just as tasty as the higher calorie ones. There are numerous websites and books that offer recipes for healthier holiday goodies.



Find a buddy who is as determined as you to make it through the holiday season. Share goals; talk often especially when the going gets difficult. Finally, stay positive. If you slip, and even the most disciplined will, don't stress but get back on track!

Remember that the holidays are as much about friends and family as about food. Enjoy the people! Have a great holiday.

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