

## Healthy Holiday Tips

### Healthy Holiday Tips - Before the Event

- Do NOT skip meals
  - “Saving up” calories can lead to feeling hungry & sets you up to not be in control which can lead to overeating
- Eat a snack before you leave home
  - Avoid feeling too hungry when you arrive
- Be the change
  - If you’re hosting – include low calorie foods – fruits, vegetable tray, deviled eggs and lean meats
  - If you’re attending – bring a healthier option like a vegetable or fruit tray

### Healthy Holiday Tips – At the Event

- Don’t hang out near the food – find a spot across the room & focus on visit with people
- Survey the entire table before you starting setting your plate.
  - Decide what foods are worth eating & will enjoy the most
  - Don’t waste calories on foods that don’t bring pleasure
- Watch your portion sizes – do NOT cover your plate completely with food

### Healthy Holiday Tips

- Drop out of the “Clean Plate Club”
  - Leave a few bites behind every time you eat – especially if you’re not enjoying it
- Eat your calories vs. drinking them
  - Stick to lower calorie or non-calorie beverages
  - Mixed drinks like eggnog and punches can add up to 500 calories per cup
- Sip a large glass of water between every alcoholic drink, non-alcoholic punch, or eggnog
  - Keeps you hydrated & you will drink fewer calories

### Recipe Modifications - alter your traditional recipes to reduce fat & calories

- Substitute skim milk & low-fat options for higher-fat products
- Using 2 egg whites in place of 1 egg can reduce dietary cholesterol and produce the same result
- Use fat-free Greek yogurt in place of sour cream or mayonnaise
- Try sliced or slivered almonds to add crunch vs. fried onion rings or croutons
- Choose low sodium broths to cut down on sodium in recipes

## Cooking Tips

- Meat, Poultry & Fish
  - Season with herbs and spices vs. salt, sauces and butter
  - Cook on a rack so the fat drips off
  - Choose low sodium/low fat broths
- Soups & Salads
  - Use a pureed potato in place of cream to thicken soups
  - Substitute beans for meat in chili
  - Try flavored vinegar and olive oil dressings
  - Use orange or lemon juice in place of some oil in homemade dressings
- Casseroles
  - Use egg whites or egg beaters vs. the whole egg
  - Reduce the amount of margarine/butter or use a lite version
  - Use fresh or frozen ingredients vs. canned
- Stuffing
  - Use low fat/lite butter/margarine
  - Use egg whites or Egg Beaters
  - Try chicken or turkey sausage vs. pork sausage
  - Use fat-free, low-sodium chicken broth
  - Use a whole grain bread
- Mashed Potatoes
  - Make with low-fat cream cheese or whipped butter
  - Replace some of the potatoes with steamed cauliflower
  - Use 1% or 2% milk or low-fat buttermilk in place of the heavy cream
- Corn Bread
  - Use low-fat buttermilk
  - Use egg whites or Egg Beaters instead of whole eggs
  - Cut down on the oil – add a splash of milk or applesauce

## Baking Tips

- Add flax meal and wheat germ to batters
- Use unsweetened applesauce, yogurt or pumpkin puree in place of oil
- Use Egg Beaters in place of eggs
- Use a few tablespoons of oat-bran in place of flour to add fiber
- For some recipes you can remove ¼ of the sugar without impacting taste or texture

## Recipe Resources

A Thanksgiving Menu with Cancer-Fighting Fiber, Vitamins and Minerals: <https://www.aicr.org/news/a-thanksgiving-menu-with-cancer-fighting-ingredients/>

Cook for your Life: <https://www.cookforyourlife.org/>

## **Holiday Eating Tips If You're in Cancer Treatment**

We all have wonderful food memories associated with the holidays. Maybe it is a favorite dish made by a loved one or a special memory of decorating cookies with your grandchildren. But during cancer treatment, visions of sugar plums may bring anxiety. When you are having trouble eating or keeping food down, the thought of holiday gatherings and meals can fill you with dread. There are a few things to keep in mind that might help you get through these occasions with reduced stress.



### **Celebrating does not have to be stressful:**

- Do not be afraid to tell people you are not up to your usual celebration.
- Delegate if you are hosting the party. People always want to know what they can do, so give them specific dishes or tasks to take some of the pressure off.
- If you have a dish you are known for, focus your energy on that one dish and let others take care of the rest. If you are not up to cooking, pass the beloved recipe to a friend or loved one for them to try.
- Offer to bring drinks, paper goods, or the centerpiece for the holiday table.
- To avoid the hassle of a big entrance, arrive early and find a quiet spot to sit if you need to escape from the hustle and bustle of the kitchen.

### **When it comes to the food, here are tips to help you find what and how much you can eat:**

- Keep an eye on foods as they arrive and identify things you think you might be able to tolerate.
- Choose from the inside of the table at a buffet, where little hands, and their germs, are less likely to reach.
- Eat before you leave the house; try a snack with some fiber and protein just in case there are not many options for you.
- Start slow and take small portions so you do not get that “overfull” feeling.
- Ask your doctor if it is ok for you to drink alcohol before you go to holiday celebrations where you might be tempted to drink.
- Look at a potluck as an opportunity to try new tastes and dishes, take advantage of the occasion to identify new flavors that might taste good to you.

### **Physical symptoms and what you can do:**

It is no secret that holiday foods tend to be fatty, greasy and heavy and the scents of so much food at once can be overpowering. If you have physical symptoms like nausea, constipation, or smell or taste changes, this can be unsettling to your system.

- If the sight or smell of food is enough to turn your stomach, grab a ginger ale or tea and move out of the area where food is being cooked or served.
- Try chewing a mint gum or drinking a hot beverage to mask the scent of food.
- Avoid anything in a cream sauce, gravy, or mayonnaise base.
- Look for baked or steamed items.
- If you feel like your traditional family side dishes will be too rich for you, offer to prepare some basic fruit or vegetable side dishes.
- Foods like rice, potatoes, noodles, and bread can be well tolerated if they are not in heavy or rich sauces.
- Turkey breast, cranberry sauce, green beans, roasted potatoes, and corn bread or yeast rolls can be simple enough items that should not upset a delicate stomach.

### **Be careful with food safety:**

If you are in cancer treatment, you may have a weakened immune system, meaning it is easier for you to get sick. Therefore, you have to be extra careful about food safety to avoid food-borne illness.

- Avoid undercooked foods like homemade eggnog, sushi, or even mayonnaise or desserts made with raw eggs (if in doubt do not be afraid to ask the chef).
- If you are at a potluck or buffet identify some safe foods— maybe cheese and crackers, salsa and chips, biscuits, snack mix, mixed nuts, cookies and cakes – that are able to sit out a little longer.
- Bring foods you know you can eat.
- You can also bring extra serving utensils so people will not feel tempted to use their hands.

The holidays are a special time, but for those in cancer treatment, there is a lot of anxiety and uncertainty as well. When you just want comfort food but it is out of your reach, that anxiety can worsen. But with a little thought, preparation, and the right approach, you can enjoy meals and time with your loved ones.