



With the holidays come many temptations for people to abandon healthy nutrition habits. During the holiday season it's important to develop a plan that doesn't leave you and your children feeling deprived, but will help kids and their parents to avoid weight gain during the next couple of months. The good news is that everyone can enjoy the wonderful foods of the holiday season as long as they do so in **moderation**. Make sure healthy food choices continue to be made available throughout the holidays.

A dozen healthy holiday tips for families

1. Don't put family members on a "diet". Instead, focus on getting proper amounts from all the food groups. You can start by helping children divide their plates into four imaginary sections: a large section for fruits and vegetables, a small section for one starch, and a medium size section for protein. Serve low-fat milk and/or water with meals.
2. If going to a party, keep the rest of the day's food selections healthier. Buy fruits and veggies to give to your kids when they want to have a snack. Before leaving for a party, offer a small snack of veggies and some protein to help curb their appetites. Fill them up a little; and they will be a little less tempted to over-eat at the party.
3. Desserts should not be kept available in the house unless for special occasions. Allow your children one dessert at a holiday dinner or at a special event.
4. Do a trade-off with exercise. Eating more during the holidays can be partially made up for by an increase in physical activity. Try 10 or 15-minute brisk walks twice a day with family members. Plan active play dates instead of the movies where they would have a tendency to sit more and ask for "junk foods."
5. If you are throwing the party, have lots of vegetables available, instead of chips only. Prepare lower fat dips and offer salsa. You can also explain to your guests in advance your plan to make this a healthier holiday season and ask them to keep this in mind when preparing any dish they may be bringing.
6. Limit or avoid high calorie beverages such as sodas, juices, and other sweetened drinks.
7. Avoid skipping meals. Starving yourself before a party or get-together increases the odds that all will overeat when the festivities begin.
8. At holiday meals, eat more of the lean meats such as roasted turkey and more vegetables. Go easy on the gravies, stuffing, and desserts.
9. If the holiday party is at your house, send some of the leftovers home with your guests.
10. Encourage your kids and family members to eat slowly, which will help to you to feel full on less food.
11. When baking holiday desserts, make only small amounts and don't keep them around all the time. Remember, what's in your house is what your family will eat. Keep other munchies around such as diced apples, pears, and other fruits.
12. During the holidays, make your goal to maintain your weight – not to lose weight.

