

Healthy Holiday Eating: Teacher's Guide

Objective: To learn how to eat sensibly and prepare healthy meals during the holiday season.

ICEBREAKER: Ask participants to share their favorite holiday food. Write their responses somewhere so everyone can see them. You will later refer back to these favorite holiday foods and suggest ways to make the higher caloric foods lower in calories, sugar or fat.

Share with participants: "Starting in October and continuing all the way through January is the *Over Indulge In Food Marathon*. The feeding frenzy begins with Halloween and moves right on into Thanksgiving, then Christmas/Kwanzaa/Hanukkah, then New Year's and finally the Super Bowl. It has been estimated that the average weight gain for Americans during this time is between 7 and 10 pounds. This weight gain each year is particularly troublesome because we are an inactive society who doesn't burn off those extra pounds easily and this means continual weight gain year after year. The best way to deal with weight gain is to prevent it from ever happening. Today we will discuss ways to eat healthier and gain less weight during the holidays."

Discuss with participants ways they can serve healthy foods for their family and guests. Ask them for ideas and share the ideas listed below.

Food Preparation and Cooking

"When you are preparing your favorite holiday foods, what are some ways you can make those foods healthier to eat and perhaps lower in calories?"

1. When hosting a holiday meal, remember to offer low calorie alternatives to the usual rich and sugary foods. Have plenty of fruits and vegetables for snacking.
2. Keep portion sizes small. Don't insist on your guest to have more.
3. Offer a choice of beverages, sweetened and unsweetened. There are many wonderful alternatives to alcoholic drinks. See handout on "Non-Alcoholic Holiday Drinks."
4. Prepare your favorite foods using less fat, sugar and salt.

Decrease fat and cholesterol in your diet.

- Cook vegetables with liquids (broth, water, etc.), not oil. Use herbs or spices to flavor vegetables instead of butter or margarine.
- Use low fat or nonfat dressings on your salads.
- Cook your grains in broths and season with herbs instead of adding fat.
- Serve breads, rolls, muffins, bagels and biscuits with low fat or nonfat spreads.
- Substitute skim milk for whole milk when cooking.
- Substitute evaporated milk for whipping cream.
- Cook lean cuts of meats and trim visible fat from meat before cooking.
- Steam, broil, or bake your foods instead of frying.

Reduce the Amount of Fats in the Meat Juices, Soups and Gravies*

- Meat and poultry juices - Use a wide-mouthed spoon to skim the fat off juices or use a fat separating pitcher.

- Soups, stews and chili – Prepare ahead and refrigerate soups, stews and chili before serving. Fats will harden when cold and can be easily removed with a spoon from the top of the food.

* For every tablespoon of fat you take out of your food, you remove 13 grams of fat and 120 calories.

Decrease sugars in your diet.

- Snack on fruits and vegetables.
- Top cakes, waffles, pancakes, cereals, etc. with fruit.
- Use less sugar when baking breads, cookies, and other desserts.
- Serve fruit for dessert.
- Eat more natural sugars that have other nutrients – Eat canned fruits sweetened with natural juices, drink 100% fruit juice instead of fruit drinks.

Altering Recipes for Better Health

REDUCING SUGAR

For cookies and cakes: Use 1/2 cup sugar for each cup of flour.

For quick breads and muffins: Use 1 tablespoon sugar for each cup of flour.

Vanilla, cinnamon and nutmeg enhance flavor when sugar is reduced.

REDUCING FAT

For cakes and quick breads: Use 2 tablespoons fat per cup of flour.

Note: It does not work well to substitute liquid oils for butter, margarine or lard in baked goods.

If you do replace liquid oils for solid fats, use less oil than solid fat.

Substitution of Oils for Solid Fats in Baked Goods*

<u>For Solid Fat...</u>	<u>Try Liquid Oil...</u>
1 Tablespoon	3/4 Tablespoon
1/3 cup	4 Tablespoons (1/4 cup)
1/2 cup	6 Tablespoons
3/4 cup	9 Tablespoons
1 cup	3/4 cup

*Source: The American Dietetic Association Complete Food and Nutrition Guide, 1996.

OMIT SALT OR REDUCE SALT

Reduce salt by 1/2.

Flavor with herbs and spices instead of salt.

Note: Do not eliminate salt from yeast bread or roll recipes. It is needed for texture and flavor.

SUBSTITUTE WHOLE GRAIN AND BRAN FLOURS

Whole wheat flour – Replace from 1/4 to 1/2 of the all-purpose flour.

If a recipe calls for 3 cups of all-purpose flour, use 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour and 1 1/2 cups wheat flour.

Oat bran – Replace up to 1/4 of the all-purpose flour.

If a recipe calls for 3 cups all-purpose flour, use 3/4 cup bran and 2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour. Handouts: "Healthy Holiday Meals", "Nutritious & Delicious Meals" and "Altering Recipes for Better Health".

Enjoy Holiday Meals Without Over Doing It

Share with participants: "We can work very hard to make our holiday foods healthier and lower in fat and sugar but this doesn't prevent overeating at meal and snack times." Have an open discussion with participants about ideas for sensible eating during the holidays to prevent overeating and gaining weight. Here are some suggestions for discussion:

1. Have a discussion with participants about holiday eating. Encourage participants who tend to overeat at holiday's meals think about why this happens.
Examples:
 - A. One reason may be there are **too many** food choices offered at the meal. This makes it difficult to eat a reasonable amount of the food. Often all of the foods offered are eaten in regular sized portions. Overeating at a holiday meal makes it easier to accept overeating at the next meal.
 - B. As a guest for a holiday meal, you feel the polite thing to do is eat everything offered at the meal.
Brainstorm solutions to prevent overeating during holidays. Examples:
 - a) If you are preparing the meal at home, remember that the leftovers can be served another day to enjoy again.
 - b) Taste all of the foods offered but in smaller portions. Plan to eat more of the same foods again at another meal that same day or later that week.
 - c) As a guest, tell the host/hostess that you are too full to eat all of the food and ask if you can take some home to eat later. Ex. Take home dessert.
 - d) During holiday gatherings don't sit next to the food bowls. Get talking and drink low calorie beverages instead of eating too much.
2. Sweets (cookies, cakes, candies) and other holiday snack foods (breads, cheeses, sausages) are temptations for snacking in-between meals. If you are given food (cookies, cakes, breads, etc.) gifts, freeze some of the foods to eat after the holidays. "Out of sight is out of mind".
3. When making holiday foods such as cookies, consider making just enough for gift giving and a little extra for you and your family. This way you will not have a lot of extra food temptations setting around.
4. When eating your holiday meal, consider splitting some of the food with someone else. Example: Everyone loves dessert but one is often full after eating the main course. Split dessert with someone instead of stuffing yourself.
5. Do not skip breakfast the day of your holiday meal thinking you will save calories. Skipping breakfast often makes you hungrier so you will probably over eat at mealtimes. For evening meals or parties, eat a light snack 20 - 30 minutes before the meal or party.
6. For some, eating slower helps to cut down on the amount of food they eat. Try this, it may work for you.

7. Store holiday treats so they are out of sight and aren't temptations between meals. Snack on fruits and vegetables. Keep ready-to-eat healthy snacks available.
8. LAST BUT NOT LEAST - Keep active during the holidays.

Activities:

1. Refer back to your list of holiday favorite foods you made during the icebreaker. Review the list with participants and come up with ways to make their holiday foods healthier (lower fat/sugar, add whole grains, serve fresh fruits for dessert or season vegetables with herbs instead of butter, etc.).
2. Ask participants to get into small groups. Assign them the task of planning a holiday meal that is healthy and tasty. Have groups share their meal plans with each other.
3. Demonstrate cooking a healthy holiday recipe and serve samples.

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