

Objective

To know how to eat during holidays and special occasions

Overview

With the holidays coming you may ask, “What can I eat?” Managing your diabetes can be a challenge this time of year, adding stress to an already hectic schedule. Take a deep breath and plan ahead. You may think this will take all the fun out of eating. On the contrary, knowing a few sensible tips will help you enjoy the season as well as manage your diabetes. Healthy food choices are the key. Enjoy your food in moderation and remember that portion size matters. A balanced meal will result in blood sugar control, while you enjoy it with family and friends. Keep in mind: you are living a healthier lifestyle.

How do you follow your meal plan when eating out?

When eating away from home on the holidays, it helps to keep two things in mind. Meals will usually: 1) be higher in fat than what you would prepare at home; and 2) contain larger portions than you would normally eat at home. Controlling portions and fat intake will help keep your restaurant meals healthier and your diabetes under better control. Turkey, chicken, ham and other “lean” meats are good by themselves and have no carbohydrates. If you have stuffing, avoid additional bread. Add more servings of vegetables, fresh fruit and salads.

Your meal plan should not only be used when you are eating at home, but even on special occasions. Always check your blood sugars before and two hours after you start a meal. This will help you evaluate whether you made the right choices.

If you would like to eat out, choose a restaurant that offers waited service. You can ask how foods are prepared. Ask if substitutions are available. If it is a new restaurant, call ahead. Ask about the types of foods they serve or request a menu. You can then plan your meal in advance, making it easier to select good choices.

How can you control portions?

Most people eat too much when they eat out and on the holidays. When you have diabetes, this means your blood sugar levels will probably rise. It is best to practice portion control.

- Practice weighing and measuring food at home. This will help teach you how to “eyeball” portion sizes at the restaurant. Below are a few helpful tips:
 - ❖ A 1 cup portion is about the size of a woman’s hand made into a fist
 - ❖ A pat of butter is approximately 1 teaspoon
 - ❖ 2 oz. of meat is about the size of a chicken leg or thigh
 - ❖ 3 oz. of meat is about the size of a deck of cards

- Ask for a “to-go” bag. Ask your server to bring you a carryout container at the start of your meal. Then, portion out the food that you will take home. Put it aside. This way you will be less tempted to overeat.
- Ask for child-sized portions or split your meal with someone else.

How can you cut the fat?

Most fat is added to foods during preparation or served as a sauce. It is easy to cut the fat. Here are a few simple guidelines.

- Certain words can warn you that a food is high in fat. Avoid foods that are fried, blackened, buttery, creamed, scalloped, with cheese or au gratin (in cheese sauce). Look for items that are baked or boiled, prepared with a tomato or cocktail sauce, sautéed in broth or wine.
- Ask for butter, margarine, mayonnaise, sour cream, sauces and dressings to be served on the side.
- Ask if “lite” or fat-free mayonnaise, margarine and salad dressings are available.
- Ask for items to be prepared without butter and without cheese.

Important Things to Remember

- Everyone with diabetes should have a meal plan. A dietitian or diabetes educator can help you develop a meal plan that works for you.
- Know your meal plan. Make a wallet-size copy of your meal plan and carry it with you.
- Plan ahead. Pick a restaurant that will allow you to make healthy food choices, especially on the holiday.
- If you want a small piece of dessert after your meal, eat fewer carbohydrates (bread, stuffing, rice or pasta, etc.) at that holiday meal.

How Can Your Doctor Help You?

If you are not certain of the best way to choose your meals on the holidays or anytime when eating away from home, your doctor can refer you to a dietitian. Be sure to discuss dietary problems or questions with your doctor. Your doctor can also help you understand how the pills or insulin you take might affect your schedule when eating out. Finally, your doctor can inform you of any other dietary needs that you may need (such as low sodium to control blood pressure).

Quiz

1. What are two things you should keep in mind about meals eaten away from home?
2. True or False: Your meal plan is designed to give you guidance only for meals eaten at home.
3. To cut fat, ask for _____ to be served on the side.
 - a) Sauces
 - b) Dressings
 - c) Butter
 - d) Sour cream
 - e) All of the above
 - f) None of the above

Answers: 1) they will be higher in fat and the portions will be larger, 2) False, 3) e