

Natural Health Guidelines for the Holidays

Thanksgiving and the November/December Holiday Season is a great time of the year for most of us. Many traditions all over the world celebrate during this time. In the Western culture it is usually a time of family and special traditions.

It is also a time where large meals and delicious desserts become the norm! I don't know how many times I remember overeating during this season...it's difficult not to! It's hard to refuse so many delicious foods! It is also a time in the Northern Hemisphere that it's colder and darker...so this is a natural time for us to want to eat larger meals and exercise less...our ancient genetics of sitting inside around the fire during the Winter comes into play. Gain some extra weight for added insulation!

Research shows that people tend to gain an average of 7 lbs during this holiday season. And although gaining a little weight isn't all bad, if you would rather not, there are specific steps you can take to keep your weight gain to a minimum. It is also important to remember that eating healthy foods is also a good idea and key to your success.

So how do we go about doing this?

Here are my 10 Guidelines to a Healthy Holiday!

1. Watch what you Eat- Don't just eat everything. Be conscious of what you are eating. You don't have to be picky about everything and ask for ingredient lists, but be aware that pure natural foods are better than processed foods...minimize any processed foods. Eat Organic and Natural whenever possible.

2. Avoid Refined Sugar – Refined sugar is simply not good for you, yet there are so many delicious holiday foods made with it. My advice is to minimize eating foods with lots of sugar...if you must take small portions only.

3. Avoid Refined Oils - Fried foods and foods with hydrogenated oils are also to be avoided. Minimize consumption of these type of foods....avoid those fried appetizers!

4. Minimize Alcohol - I know this is a hard one for many. I didn't say not to drink and be merry, just avoid *overdrinking*. Not only does it add empty calories to your diet, it also makes you eat a lot more food. Try alternating juice or water with alcohol or limit yourself to a couple drinks.

5. Watch your Portion Size - This is the KEY! If you would remember anything in this article it would be Watch your Portions! Don't take seconds if you can avoid it..or take a small portion. Don't stuff yourself...eat normally. If you want to try everything, then put small samples on your plate. If you absolutely love one dish, try a second portion of that dish only. Let your food digest before you go for seconds...see if your stomach really needs it.

6. Drink Water & Tea – This will help you avoid overeating. By drinking water and herbal tea, your body will already be partially full. It will also help with your digestion. If there are snacks around, minimize eating them and instead add a nice glass or two of water or a good cup of tea...this will help with your hunger pains!

7. Exercise - Get out there for a walk! Walk off that food with your family. Go outside and play with the kids. Or go to the gym and work up a sweat! Don't just eat and sit...get off your chair and get out in the fresh air. This is a great time for family also...get outside and play or converse!

8. Take a Break from Eating - Don't be constantly eating snacks, desserts and all the good foods! You had a good family meal ? Take a day or three to digest it and eat lighter. Have a holiday party? Take the next day or two and minimize your food intake. A 24-48 hour fast can also help you digest the foods you've eaten and minimize the damage!

9. Minimize your Processed Carbs - Carbs, carbs, everyone says avoid carbs...well there is some truth to this. If you are going to eat carbohydrates try to avoid processed carbs...minimize your consumption of chips, bread and rolls, anything made with processed flour, in particular wheat flour. Also watch those mashed potatoes and white rice!

10. Eat your Vegetables & Proteins - Another KEY! Want to eat a bit more? Eat some good green veggies! Take a second helping of natural proteins, such as turkey, chicken, fish, beans or tofu...add some natural veggies and you've got a good meal. These are the foods that can be eaten more regularly...in particularly the veggies!

11. DONT STRESS OUT ABOUT IT! - Enjoy yourself and your family. Your mental health is also important! Don't hurt someone's feelings by refusing their homemade dessert just because you have to be "strict"...enjoy! Try a small portion, just minimize your consumption. Relax and breathe. A little bit of "bad" foods will not hurt you. Try to follow my guidelines to the best that you can and you will be fine!

To your health! Brian M Heater
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