



Have a Healthy Thanksgiving: 5 Tips to Avoid Overindulging

During Thanksgiving, it's easy to go overboard with the calories and consumption. Temptations of gooey pecan pie and dense sweet potatoes topped with crackly marshmallows make it seem impossible to be disciplined.

But eating healthfully on Thanksgiving doesn't mean you have to forgo all your favorite foods, said Jennifer K. Nelson, a registered dietitian and director of clinical dietetics at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn.

"If you've got your eating under control for the majority of the time, go ahead and have a piece of pie — just don't lose control entirely," Nelson told *MyHealthNewsDaily*. "Keep your willpower and your wits about you."

Here are five ways experts recommend you can avoid overdoing it on one of the greatest food days of the year — while still leaving room for dessert.



1. Stick to healthy portions.

Just one plate of Thanksgiving food is all you get, Nelson said. Fill up half your plate with vegetables, fruit and a whole wheat roll, a quarter of it with mashed potatoes or sweet potatoes, and a quarter of it with turkey or ham. And, the more colorful your plate, the better — so get lots of leafy greens, carrots, bell peppers and beets in your veggie spread, Nelson said.

"If you fill up on those lower caloric density and higher nutrition things, you're going to feel full, but not bloated and tired, because it's a lighter fare," she said.

It's a holiday, so indulge a bit if your diet allows it. But if you're going to eat dessert, make sure you allot for the calories elsewhere — don't go back for that second helping of marshmallow sweet potatoes, and instead opt for the cranberry salad, said American Dietetic Association spokeswoman Dee Sandquist.

If you're going for the pie, pick fruit or pumpkin pies because they tend to have fewer calories than chocolate or pecan pies, Sandquist said.

Try also to stick to single servings of the more unhealthy foods, she said. Aim to have a half-cup of mashed potatoes — about the size of a regular-sized cupcake wrapped — and a 3-ounce serving of turkey — about the size of a checkbook.

2. Eat before you indulge.

Don't starve yourself during the early part of Thanksgiving Day, with the idea that you're just "saving room" for all the food, or that this will make it okay for you to overeat later. It's a recipe for overeating, Sandquist said.

If you're going to a Thanksgiving lunch, be sure you eat breakfast before. If you're going to a dinner, be sure you eat lunch or have a snack in the afternoon.

"You definitely want to have your normal meals because otherwise, whenever we get over-hungry, we overeat," she said.

3. Substitute healthy ingredients for unhealthy ones.

There are plenty of ways to make Thanksgiving fare healthier. For mashed potatoes, Nelson suggested mixing in chicken broth, herbs or roasted garlic to perk up the flavor instead of adding in butter.

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For green bean casserole, swap out fried onions with toasted almonds for a less-oily alternative, and instead of having cranberry sauce, opt instead to make a cranberry salad, Sandquist said. And for dips, use Greek yogurt instead of sour cream — the consistency is similar, but yogurt has less fat and more protein, she said.

Another easy way to cut fat out of your meal is to avoid eating the skin on the turkey. Dark meat has a little more fat than white meat, but limiting your helpings of unhealthy sides or dessert will have a much bigger impact than just eating white meat instead of dark, Sandquist said.

If you're baking homemade pie, opt for whole wheat pie crusts and substitute low-fat or skim milk for evaporated milk, she said.

4. Drink lots of water and take a walk after eating.

Many times when people think they are hungry, they are actually just thirsty, Sandquist said. By drinking lots of water throughout the day, you'll lower the risk of overeating.

It's also a good idea to take a walk after eating to get your metabolism going instead of laying on the couch, she said.

5. Avoid snacking throughout the day.

Abide by the "out of sight, out of mind" mantra, Sandquist said: Once you've filled your plate with food, cover up the food and put it away.

"It'll help you avoid mindless munching," she said. When you snack throughout the day, it's easy to lose track of how much you've eaten.

Butternut Squash & Apple Soup

8 servings (about ½ cup each) – Total Time: 35 minutes

Ingredients

1 ½ tsp. unsalted butter	
1 ¼ c. chopped Vidalia or other sweet onion	¼ tsp. freshly ground pepper
1 large garlic clove, smashed and peeled	1/8 tsp. ground nutmeg
1 1/3 c. cubed peeled Braeburn apple	2 c. fat-free, less-sodium chicken broth
1 ¼ lbs. cubed peeled butternut squash	½ c. fat-free evaporated milk
¼ tsp. dried rubbed sage	¼ cup crème fraîche, for garnish
½ tsp. kosher salt, plus pinch	



Preparation

1. Melt butter in large saucepan over medium heat. Add onion; sauté 3 minutes. Add garlic and apple; cook, stirring constantly, 1 minute. Add squash and next 4 ingredients; stir 30 seconds or until well-combined. Add broth, and bring to a simmer. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer 20 minutes or until squash and vegetables are tender.
2. Place half of squash mixture in blender with 1/4 cup evaporated milk. Remove center of blender lid (to let steam escape); secure lid. Place clean towel over opening to avoid splatters; blend until smooth. Pour into bowl. Repeat with remaining squash and evaporated milk.
3. Spoon 1/2 cup soup into small bowl or mini pumpkin. Swirl in 3/4 teaspoon crème fraîche, if desired. Serve immediately.

Nutrition Facts (per serving): 103 calories; 4g fat (2g saturated); 4g protein; 115mg sodium

Source(s): <http://www.myhealthnewsdaily.com/569-five-tips-avoiding-overindulging-thanksgiving.html>;
<http://www.health.com/health/recipe/0,,10000001854048,00.html>