10 Tips for Controlling Your Eating During the Holidays

By CRC Health Group

Controlling what you eat during the holidays is a challenge, especially for people who are struggling with an eating disorder or weight management problem. Here are 10 ways to take control so that you can enjoy yourself without putting your health at risk:

1. **Plan what you’ll eat.** Try to decide which food groups you will eat before attending a holiday dinner or party. That way, you won’t be as tempted to fill your plate with desserts instead of healthier options, like vegetables or proteins.

2. **Keep a food journal.** Keeping a daily journal of what you eat can help you manage what you consume during the holidays. Be sure to write down everything, even if you want to pretend you didn’t actually eat as much as you did.

3. **Eat regular meals.** Not eating for two days before Thanksgiving in preparation for a big meal is not a wise decision. The hungrier you are, the more likely you are to overeat and be tempted by foods that aren’t as good for you. Eating regular meals during the day will keep you full and decrease the chance of you stuffing yourself during a holiday meal.

4. **Bring a dish.** To ensure there is at least one healthy option, offer to make something to eat. That way you have control over the contents of one dish and can eat it without feeling guilty.

5. **Control your portions.** An empty plate and a buffet of holiday foods can equal disaster unless you control the amount of food you put on your plate. When deciding how much to take, visualize proper portions. You aren’t obligated to eat as much as possible just because it’s there.

6. **Stay away from your weaknesses.** Everybody has their food weaknesses. If possible, avoid those foods that you know you won’t be able to stop eating. Sit away from chips and dip and position yourself near the fruit tray. That way, you’re more likely to grab something healthy.

7. **Keep your house temptation-free.** It may be hard to avoid sweets at work or at a holiday gathering, but try as much as possible to keep them out of your home to reduce the temptation to eat them. If you end up getting a lot of baked goods and candy as presents, bring them to work or re-gift them so that you don’t end up feeling guilty for eating them all. Remember that out of sight is out of mind when it comes to the foods you keep in your house.

8. **Get support.** Get support from your therapist, family or friends. Learn what triggers your disordered eating and try, through your support system, to avoid those situations. Make sure you have people around you who you can turn to if you feel overwhelmed.

9. **Minimize holiday stress.** A lot of eating disorder behavior is caused by stress, which can cause people revert to negative coping methods. Reducing the number of obligations you commit yourself to during the holidays and otherwise reducing your stress can help you keep your eating under control.

10. **Focus on the celebration.** Throughout the holiday season, keep in mind that the purpose is to celebrate with friends and family. Don’t put the focus on how much you have eaten, or how much weight you feel as though you have gained. Enjoying where you are and who you are with is time well spent.