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WELLNESS WEEKLY

Tips for a Thinner Thanksgiving

*Enjoy the holiday feast without the guilt --
or the weight gain.*

Thanksgiving only comes around once a year, so why not go ahead and splurge? Because most of us pack on at least a pound (some gain more) during the holidays -- and keep the extra weight permanently. But Thanksgiving does not have to sabotage your weight, experts say. With a little know-how, you can satisfy your desire for traditional favorites and still enjoy a guilt-free Thanksgiving feast.

Get Active

Create a calorie deficit by exercising to burn off extra calories before you ever indulge in your favorite foods, suggests Connie Diekman, MEd, RD, former president of the American Dietetic Association (ADA). "Eat less and exercise more" is the winning formula to prevent weight gain during the holidays," Diekman says. Try taking a walk early in the day and again after dinner. It is a wonderful way for families to get physical activity and enjoy the holiday together.

Eat Breakfast

While you might think it makes sense to save up calories for the big meal, experts say eating a small meal in the morning can give you more control over your appetite. Start your day with a small but satisfying breakfast -- such as an egg with a slice of whole-wheat toast, or a bowl of whole-grain cereal with low-fat milk -- so you won't be starving when you arrive at the gathering.

Lighten Up

Whether you are hosting Thanksgiving dinner or bringing a few dishes to share, make your recipes healthier with less fat, sugar, and calories. A few suggestions are:

- Use fat-free chicken broth to baste the turkey and make gravy.
- Use sugar substitutes in place of sugar and/or fruit purees instead of oil in baked goods.
- Reduce oil and butter wherever you can.
- Try plain yogurt or fat-free sour cream in creamy dips, mashed potatoes, and casseroles.

Police Your Portions

Before you fill your plate, survey the buffet table and decide what you're going to choose. Then select reasonable-sized portions of foods you cannot live without. Most importantly, skip the seconds.



While each of us has our own favorites, keep in mind that some holiday foods are better choices than others. "White turkey meat, plain vegetables, roasted sweet potatoes, mashed potatoes, defatted gravy, and pumpkin pie tend to be the best bets because they are lower in fat and calories," says Diekman.

Slowly Savor

Eating slowly, putting your fork down between bites, and tasting each mouthful is one of the easiest ways to enjoy your meal and feel satisfied with one plate full of food, experts say. Choosing whole grains, fruits, vegetables, broth-based soups, salads, and other foods with lots of water and fiber add to the feeling of fullness.

Be Realistic

The holiday season is a time for celebration. With busy schedules and so many extra temptations, this is a good time to strive for weight maintenance instead of weight loss.

Focus on Family and Friends

Thanksgiving is not just about the delicious bounty of food. It's a time to celebrate relationships with family and friends. The main event should be family and friends socializing, spending quality time together, not just what is on the buffet.