Healthy Holidays

Step 1: Plan and Prepare

★ Make a lower-fat/lower-sugar dish. This gives you at least 1 healthy dish you know you can enjoy. Preparing a low-fat vegetable dish will also give you something you can fill-up on without a lot of calories.

★ Challenge friends and family members to make their dishes healthier. Holidays and social occasions are certainly about getting together and enjoying good food, but for most dishes you can use lower fat ingredients without affecting the taste.

★ Eat regular meals. Eating regular meals or having a healthy snack before attending a social engagement can help curb your appetite and help you feel fuller with less food.

★ Get active. Being physically active not only burns calories while you are active, but it also keeps your metabolism higher for up to 12 hours after exercising; helping you burn off more of those holiday calories. Plus, exercise can help curb your appetite if done shortly before eating.

Step 2: Survey and Decide

★ Look before you leap. Surveying the spread before starting through the buffet line can help you be more selective when you are filling up your plate.

★ Be picky. Only choose the foods you REALLY want to have. Leave behind things you have on a regular basis or items that you don’t really care about eating. Your favorite dishes will be more enjoyable because you aren’t filling up on other unessential things.

Step 3: Dish and Enjoy

★ Take half. Take ½ of the portion that you would typically have if you will be eating a wider variety of foods than usual when things are all said and done.

★ Stop and think. Sometimes thinking about the amount of fat, sugar or calories in something before eating it can curtail any desire to choose that food or can help you limit the amount of the food that you eat. Also, it helps limit grazing on treats, appetizers and left-overs.

★ Nourish yourself with good company. Enjoy visiting with family and friends rather than overindulging in rich foods to get the most out of holiday meals and social occasions.
* **Eat slowly.** Eating more slowly will allow you to take your time with 1 plate of food and avoid getting seconds when everyone is still sitting around the table talking. Savoring each bite helps you enjoy the food more without enjoying more food. It also gives your body more time to start to feel full and satisfied and cue your brain that it doesn’t want anymore to eat.

* **Drink a calorie-free beverage.** By replacing a regular soda, juice, etc with a calorie-free beverage you are cutting down on your overall calorie intake. Plus, drinking a calorie-free beverage with your meal will help fill you up.

**Step 4: Distance and Divert**

* **Step away from the table.** When you are done eating and find yourself reaching for another helping, it is time to walk away. Get up and move from the table.

* **Divert your attention.** Go find a group of people to talk to, play with the children, volunteer to help clean-up or watch a sports game that’s on; anything to get away from the food area.

* **Practice stop and think again.** Remember to stop and think, “Am I really hungry, do I really want that, etc?” before reaching for an appetizer or a sweet treat.

* **Get Active.** Get a group of people together for a walk, throw the football around outdoors, or join the kids in an active game. Remember physical activity can help burn off calories and curb your appetite. Plus, it will help distance you from the food and keep you busy while still socializing with friends and family.

* **Remember there will be left-overs.** Sometimes it feels like we have to eat so much of something because we only get it once a year. If you really want to make sure you get a second taste of something, put aside a small serving of it to enjoy the next day or ask the hostess for a small package of left-overs to take with you.