


## HEALTHY HOLIDAY STRATEGIES

A collection of holiday decorations including pine branches, gold stars, pinecones, and red berries on a white background.

The holidays are full of fun, celebration and of course delicious, irresistible FOOD. You can enjoy your favourite holiday treats without feeling guilty. As you head into the month of December consider these tips and tricks for staying on track as you enjoy eggnog, shortbread, and other festive goodies.

**Maintain, but don't Gain – BE REALISTIC!** If you have been working hard at following a healthy lifestyle to help you lose weight, focus on sustaining the positive changes you have made to avoid slipping back into old habits. Keep a food journal to maintain focus and accountability. Write down your health goals and keep them in a visible area: on your fridge, desk or in your wallet. Each time you feel tempted to overindulge take a glance at your goals and reflect on why it is important for you to make healthy food choices.

**Indulge with LIMITS.** Think about your MUST-HAVES and the foods that you can easily pass up. Be picky! Avoid sampling everything. Take tasters of your absolute favourites and set limits on how much and how often you will treat yourself. For example, I will have two gingerbread cookies at my work holiday party.

**Eat slowly and SAVOUR the flavour.** Get the most pleasure out of your holiday indulgences by taking the time to sit down, relax and truly enjoy the taste and sensation of eating. This will help satisfy your cravings and reduce the urge for seconds.

**Remember to exercise.** December is a busy time of year, making it easy to put exercise on the back burner. Remember that exercise will help burn those extra calories you are GOING TO eat or DID eat. Schedule in a 150-minutes a week of moderate-vigorous physical activity in bouts of 10 minutes or more.

**Plan ahead for health.** Create a holiday schedule. Pencil in parties, dine outs and other social functions. Think about “high risk situations” where you may be tempted to overdo it. Create an action plan for each event to keep your health on track. This could include setting goals such as:

- Eat extra healthy the day of to help compensate for excess calories. Watch portions and eat clean! Avoid excess fat and processed foods and choose lean protein sources, whole grains, low fat milk products, fruits and vegetables.
- Eat light but don't skip meals. Avoid the famine-then-feast approach to eating. Eat every 3-4 hours and include a balanced, nutritious breakfast and lunch to prevent hunger and cravings from ruling your food choices.
- Eat a small snack beforehand to avoid arriving famished and ready to pounce the buffet. Grab a piece of fruit, yogurt, a few nuts, or sliced veggies and hummus before heading out the door.



- Bring a guilt-free appetizer or dessert such as vegetables and lower fat dip, whole-wheat pita and hummus, shrimp and cocktail sauce, or fruit and yogurt dip. This will guarantee at least one healthy option to chow down on.
- Scan the spread of food before you dive in and start packing up your plate. Identify the healthiest options available and your MUST-HAVES and set limits.
- Avoid hanging out near the food to prevent mindless nibbling when you are already full. Take your plate into another room for some calorie-free mingling.
- Use small plates and utensils to limit the amount of food you can fit on your plate or in your mouth!
- Fill half your plate with vegetables to help fill you up for less and prevent you from gorging on calorie dense options.
- Remember liquid calories count! Eggnog can add up to 360 calories a cup. Add some rum to it and you have enough calories for a meal! Try light beer, wine spritzers or use soda water to mix with. Sip on water or a light beverage in between cocktails to keep you satiated and hydrated. For example, sparkling water with lemon or a splash of cranberry juice.
- Clear your plate when you are finished to prevent picking at food when you have already hit your limit. Bring a mini bottle of mouthwash or chew some gum to refresh your palate!
- Wait out your cravings! It takes 20 minutes for your brain to register that you have eaten. If you are tempted for 2nds, distract yourself for at least 20 minutes by sipping on water, decaf tea or coffee or going for a walk with a friend.

**Over the holiday season my challenges will be:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**My 3 SMART goals for the HOLIDAYS are:**

Goal 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Barrier: \_\_\_\_\_

Plan for overcoming barrier: \_\_\_\_\_

Goal 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Barrier: \_\_\_\_\_

Plan for overcoming barrier: \_\_\_\_\_

Goal 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Barrier: \_\_\_\_\_

Plan for overcoming barrier: \_\_\_\_\_

**I am going to do the following to stay MOTIVATED and ON TRACK over the holidays:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.