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Tips for a Healthy Holiday Season

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The holiday season is generally a time for celebrating with friends and family. It is also the time we indulge in all of our traditional holiday goodies. Many of these foods are full of sugar and fat. Because they are only available during the holiday season, we look forward to eating them.

So how can we keep from putting on pounds and still enjoy our holiday traditions? Portion control is the answer. There is no need to exclude your holiday favorites. Knowing when to stop eating is the key. Small cuts in calories here and there can make a big difference to avoid that dreaded holiday weight gain.

Strategies to help you avoid overeating:

- Use a smaller plate. It encourages less food and proper portion sizes.
- Start your day with a healthy breakfast. Include whole grains, fruit, low-fat dairy, and protein such as eggs, ham, or peanut butter. Eating breakfast can control appetite during the day.
- Eat balanced meals. Have a small taste of everything, but fill up on fruits and vegetables. Choose vegetables and fruits that have a variety of colors and nutrients.
- Eat slowly. Savor every bite. Before you go back for seconds wait ten minutes to see if you really are still hungry.
- Choose water or low-fat milk instead of sugar-sweetened drinks. Fruits or vegetables steeped in water are a "flavorable" alternative. Another healthy option is unsweetened tea and herbal tea.
- Carry healthy snacks in your purse or car. This helps avoid visiting the drive-thru while doing errands. Snacks that are nutrient dense are the best. Almonds are easy, travel well and have a lot of great nutrients.

Tips to help you reduce sugar and fat in recipes:

- You can reduce the amount of sugar in most recipes by 25 percent without much change to the flavor of the product. Try adding cinnamon or vanilla to recipes to give the idea of sweetness.
- Replace half of the fat or oil in baked goods recipes (except cookies) with unsweetened applesauce.
- Use low-fat or fat-free versions of milk, cheese, yogurt, sour cream and cream.



Let's Talk

With kids on holiday break, this is a perfect time to teach your child about preparing food. In addition to being fun, kids will learn important skills and old family recipes. Seeing family and friends enjoying their creations boosts self-esteem. Start with simple techniques like rolling dough, using a cookie cutter or spreading frosting. As you are preparing food, explain different methods of cooking and their purpose.

Age specific tasks children can handle:

Three year olds: Wash fruits and vegetables, stir ingredients in a bowl, tear lettuce and pour liquids

Four year olds: Grease pans, open packages, peel oranges or hard-cooked eggs, snip fresh herbs with dull scissors and mash bananas with a fork

Five and six year olds: Stir mixtures, snap green beans, prepare lettuce for a salad, press cookie cutters, pour liquids and measure ingredients

Seven and eight year olds: Rinse vegetables, mix and shake ingredients, beat eggs, measure dry ingredients, roll and shape cookies

Nine and 10 year olds: Knead bread dough, stir hot mixtures, blend batters, broil foods in toaster oven, and cut foods with a table knife

Children age 10 and older: Slice or chop vegetables, boil potatoes, microwave foods, bake foods in the oven, and simmer ingredients on the stove.



Physical Activities:

During the holidays, physical activity is one thing we let slip so that we can get everything accomplished on our list. However, one of the best things you can do is stay active during the holidays. It can help relieve stress, regulate appetite, and burn up extra calories from holiday eating. Being physically active takes planning any time of year, but especially during the holiday season. Here are some fun ways to stay active as a family in the winter months.

- Walking around to view the festive lights
- Ice skating
- Snowball fights
- Shoveling snow; provide a kid sized shovel to the smaller family members
- Skiing/snowboarding
- Building snowmen, snow caves, etc.
- Sledding
- Snowshoeing
- Blowing bubbles and watching them turn to “ice bubbles”
- Looking for animal tracks

Recipe for Health:

Black Bean Brownies

Ingredients:

1 can (15 to 16 oz.) black beans, drained and rinsed

3 eggs

3 Tbsp. vegetable oil

¼ c. cocoa powder

1 pinch salt

1 tsp. vanilla extract

¾ c. white sugar

1 tsp. instant coffee (optional)

½ c. semi-sweet chocolate chips

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 F. Lightly grease an 8- by 8-inch baking dish.

Combine all ingredients except chocolate chips in a blender; blend until



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smooth; pour mixture into prepared baking dish. Sprinkle with chocolate chips. Bake in preheated oven until top is dry and sides start to pull away from the baking dish; about 30 minutes.

Makes 16 servings: Per serving: 140 calories, 6 grams (g) fat, 3 g protein, 20 g carbohydrate and 105 mg sodium.

Recipe featured by: North Dakota State University Extension Service
@ http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/globalfood/Visual%20Recipe_BlackBean-Brownies.pdf

Helping families increase physical activity and enjoy healthy foods...