

Healthy Holidays....REALLY!

By J. Sherrard, MS, RD, MCHES, Department Head, Deployment Health and Wellness Center



Eating and drinking seem to go hand in hand with holiday planning and merriment. However, we all know too much of a good thing can be lead to too much of a bad result. It doesn't matter if you've been bad or good, those holiday calories can add up to rough start to a New Year.

Here are some practical recommendations to engage our strategies in making some positive changes to controlling those holiday indulgences. How can you enjoy the holidays and prevent adding on extra pounds for the New Year? A registered dietitian is an excellent resource to help you develop your personal strategies and to help you create a plan of action. If you would like to speak to a dietitian at Naval Hospital Pensacola, please contact your Medical Home Port Team.

Here are 7 holiday helpers to make your season brighter (healthier and leaner)...

Go Easy at the Party – Especially in the Beginning...

Appetizers and tapas tend to be laden with fat grams and ample calories – offer light and satisfying finger foods like whole wheat crackers, dips made with fat-free Greek yogurt, fresh fruit and vegetable platters, shrimp cocktail and smoked salmon.

Plan Your Menu Using Smart Choices....They can be Fun and Tasty too...

Plan your menu using fruits, vegetables, lean meats, seafood, whole grains, and low-fat dairy. Don't forget to read those nutrition labels. To reduce calories and fat, even more, go easy on nuts, cheeses, sauces, cream-style gravies, butter, cream, whipped cream and etc.

Veggie Power...

Include vegetables at every turn. Adding more fruits and vegetables to your dishes will take your menu from tasty to terrific. This will also 'fill' your guests with healthy fiber, vitamins and minerals and you'll feel even better about what you are serving.

Make Quality Substitutions....

Swap out those high fat, high sugar, high calorie items with quality substituted items such as low fat or fat free salad dressings, sour cream, mayonnaise, cheeses, yogurt, sauces and gravies. They will give you the same quality without the additional grams of fat and calories.

Get the Scoop on Special Requests Ahead of Time...

As you plan your holiday menu, ask if guests have any food preferences or intolerances. It's always nice to know these things ahead of time and it shows that 'extra' care you've placed on hosting and taking care of your loved ones and guests. Just think you might win the 'best host/hostess of the year award' for doing such wonderful things.

Try to Roasting, Grilling or Other Low-Fat Cooking Methods....

Roasting or grilling meat, vegetables, fruits and seafood is a preferred method of cooking to ensure a lower fat, lower calorie end product. This type of cooking also accentuates the flavor and juiciness of the food item.

App the Party, Baby...

Include a fun game by using a popular, reliable smart phone app for added party fun. Compliment each dish you provide by displaying a nutritional place card. List the total calories, grams of fat, carbohydrate and protein, for each determined serving size. You can use the same app to determine these totals prior to the party. Then have each person tally their evening's totals. Give party favors for least grams of fat, best overall intake, etc.

Don't forget to include water and low-calorie beverages for choices to compliment your holiday eating. Remember, the holidays are marked with many traditions, but the real meaning is about spending time with family, friends and loved-ones. If you try one or more of these tips, you're sure to enjoy a healthier, leaner holiday season. Don't forget exercise it always compliments a healthy eating plan. Enjoy and happy, safe and healthy holidays!