Eating mindfully and keeping your diet in balance during the holidays can be a real challenge unless you have the right mindset. These fifteen holiday eating tips will help you enjoy the season more while eating less

15 tips for mindful holiday eating

By MICHELLE MAY, M.D.

Do you anticipate the holidays but dread the inevitable onslaught of holiday eating

opportunities? Do your holiday events revolve around eating more than the people, presents, decorations, travel, or meaning of the season??

Eating mindfully and keeping your diet in balance during the holidays can be a real challenge unless you have the right mindset. These fifteen holiday eating tips will help you enjoy the season more while eating less:

1. It’s easy to be distracted from signals of physical hunger and satiety at social gatherings, especially when food is the main event. Pay close attention to your body's signals to guide your eating.

2. Think of your appetite as an expense account. How much do you want to spend on appetizers or the entrée? Do you want to save some room for dessert? Go through this process mentally to avoid eating too much food and feeling uncomfortable for the rest of the evening.

3. Ignore the outdated diet advice of "eat before you go to a party so you won't be tempted." That’s absurd! You want to be hungry enough to enjoy your favorites. Pace your eating prior to the event so you’ll be hungry but not famished at mealtime.

4. Most people are food suggestible so socialize away from the sight of the food.

5. Survey all of the food at a buffet before making your choices. Choose the foods that you really want most and remind yourself that you can have the other foods another time.

6. Be a food snob. Skip the store-bought goodies, the dried-out fudge and the so-so stuffing. How much less would you eat if you only ate foods that tasted fabulous?

7. If the food is so special, then rather than eating on autopilot, give it your full attention. Eat mindfully by reducing distractions and sitting down to eat – even if it's just a cookie.

8. Appreciate the appearance and aroma of your food. Put your fork down and savor one small bite at a time. You'll eat less food but enjoy it more.

9. If the food doesn't taste as good as you expected, stop eating it and choose something else.

10. Be aware of mindless grazing that leaves you feeling stuffed but strangely unsatisfied.

11. Be cautious of obligatory eating – eating just because it’s on your plate, you paid for it, it’s free, or someone made it for you. A polite but firm "No thank you" usually works well but if you're concerned about hurting someone’s feelings, ask for the recipe or a small portion to take home with you for another meal.

12. Before reaching for seconds, pause and ask, "How do I want to feel when I'm finished?"

13. Restaurant servings are often "two for the price of one." Request appetizer portions, co-order with your dining partners, or have the server package up your meal to go as soon as you feel satisfied.

14. During extended holiday meals, you may want to remove your plate taken away (or put your napkin over it) to avoid nibbling unconsciously.

15. Don’t use exercise as punishment for eating. Instead, look for opportunities to move more like a walk after dinner to enjoy the holiday lights, a few laps around the mall before it opens, or treat guests to local holiday attractions.

Most importantly, delight all of your senses. Enjoy the company, the atmosphere, the entertainment, and the traditions as much, if not more, than the food.

” Website: http://www.amihungry.com.