

Dr. Ryhal Offers Tips for Eating Healthier This Holiday Season

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The holiday season is often a time filled with family and friends, festivities and...food. With savory meals and sweet treats tempting at nearly every turn, it can be hard to maintain healthy eating habits during the holidays.

“On average, Americans gain approximately one to two pounds in the weeks between Thanksgiving and New Year’s Day,” said Maria Ryhal, M.D., a family medicine physician affiliated with Salem Regional Medical Center’s medical staff and SRMC Primary Care - Lisbon. “While that may not sound like much, extra pounds can add up over time and lead to health issues such as high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol levels and diabetes. The good news is that with a little planning and moderation, you can still enjoy the holidays without adding pounds.”



Here are some tips to help you celebrate your holiday season in a healthier way:

- **Change the way you view holiday parties.** Mingle with others away from the food table loaded with “goodies.” Focus on socializing, not eating.
- **Have a healthy snack.** Never go to a party hungry – an empty stomach can sabotage even the strongest willpower. Have a small, low-calorie snack, such as fruit, string cheese or a salad, before leaving home.
- **Don’t skip meals, even on party days.** Skipping meals may cause you to overeat when food is served. Instead, choose lower calorie meals throughout the day to reserve some extra calories for the special occasion.
- **Be choosy.** If the gathering offers a buffet, look over all of the choices and be selective. Make only one trip. Avoid or limit appetizers that are battered, fried or covered with sauce.
- **Take small portions of food.** Eat slowly and enjoy the flavor.

- **Prepare more healthful foods.** Whenever possible, substitute lower fat ingredients for some of the high-fat ingredients found in traditional recipes (such as low-fat or fat-free sour cream).
- **Send your leftovers packing.** If you're hosting the party, pack leftovers for your guests to take home.
- **Limit alcohol.** Alcoholic beverages are high in calories and low in nutritional value. Enjoy low calorie seltzer or club soda with a twist of lemon or lime.
- **Stay active.** While you should always check with your doctor before starting an exercise program, try to squeeze in at least 30 minutes of physical activity every day.

"It's ok to allow yourself some special treats to celebrate the holiday season, but balance the occasional indulgence with healthy, low-fat meals that include plenty of fruits and vegetables," Dr. Ryhal added. "Instead of losing holiday pounds, your New Year's resolution can be to keep up the healthy eating habits you've already been practicing."

SRMC Primary Care is located at 38506 Saltwell Road in Lisbon, and is the practice location of Dr. Maria Ryhal and certified family nurse practitioner Suzanne Cavalier, MSN, APRN, FNP-C. For more information about SRMC Primary Care in Lisbon and the services provided, call 330-424-1404.

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