

Holiday Health: Don't ditch diet during holidays

December 22, 2006

Posted: 12/22/06

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The holidays are right around the corner, and that means parties, family get-togethers and plenty of favorite comfort foods. What would a holiday be without turkey, dressing, pie, cranberries and more?

Is it possible to navigate the holidays without ruining our diet? Yes, said Dee Rollins, clinical dietitian and nutrition educator for Baylor Regional Medical Center at Grapevine. The key is to be conscious of what we eat.

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Rollins offers these eight tips for healthy holiday eating:

1. Never go to a party hungry. Many people skip meals before a party. That sets them up for failure. Instead, eat regular meals that day and have a small snack before you leave home. Try cheese and crackers, a piece of

fruit or peanut butter on toast.

2. Remember why you're there. The party may be based around food, but you're there to socialize. Make eating secondary. Don't hover around the food table. Take what you want and move away.

3. Enjoy your favorite holiday foods. Select the special foods you might not get at any other time during the year—like dressing and gravy—and savor them. Skip the rest. Rollins' philosophy is, "If it isn't 'to die for' wonderful, why eat it?"

4. Watch the calories that come with beverages. A glass of wine might be 150 calories, while a cocktail with fruit juice might have 200 calories.

5. Portion size counts. We may be expected to overindulge during the holidays, but over time, we'll pay the price. If the portion you've been given is super-size, you don't have to eat it all at once. Enjoy a small helping and ask if you can take home the rest.

6. Pay attention to your body. It takes 20 minutes for the signal to reach our brain that we're full.

7. Don't forget to exercise. Many people may turn to food when they feel overwhelmed. When our stress level goes up, we eat more and sleep less. Exercise can help. Make it part of your holiday routine.

8. Be a helpful hostess. Offer the healthiest food you can. Alter a recipe so it's low-fat or lower in sugar. Make the brownies bite-size. Plan a beautiful spread with fruit and vegetables. People will eat what you serve.

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