

## 5 Ways to Prepare for Holiday Gatherings

Living with prediabetes or diabetes can sometimes result in wondering what to do with food at gatherings around this time of year. Should you enjoy in bliss or restrict yourself? Well, it can be a happy balance between these options. The holidays should be a time we can feel confident in our choices but enjoy our time together. The tips below can help you prepare for events that come your way!

- 1. Remember to enjoy the season.** No one wants to worry about having a good time and about the foods we choose. Take this time to give yourself a bit of grace. Enjoy time with your family or friends without the worry of food. You can still prepare for food choices and participate in holiday gatherings.
- 2. Does it spark joy?** Not just for organizing your home, asking yourself if you really enjoy the food can make deciding on what to eat easier. It's the time when you sit down for a meal and everything looks delicious. Take a moment to think about the foods you enjoy the most. Mushrooms, not your thing? Then pass on the stuffed mushrooms and choose a food which you have been looking forward to.
- 3. Check-in with your body.** When you sit down for a meal, take a moment to assess your hunger level? Did you just eat a snack, and the meal happens to be ready? Choose smaller portions first then assess whether or not you feel satisfied. It is easier to add food to your plate than return it to the pot! If you eat a smaller amount because you're not hungry you won't find yourself on the couch trying to decide if the pie will fit onto your plate!
- 4. Divide your plate and portion to accommodate your carbohydrate choices.** Wondering if you use your carbohydrate choices for the mashed potatoes or the dressing? If this is the one time you can have these foods, which make the holidays special, fit them into your plate. Depending on the number of carbohydrates you have for a meal, allow yourself to fit these favorites into your plate. If you have 3 carbohydrate choices for a meal, look at the portion size and make it work for your plate.
- 5. Be mindful of how you fill your plate.** If all else fails, use the diabetes healthy plate model. Fill  $\frac{1}{2}$  of your plate with non-starchy vegetables,  $\frac{1}{4}$  lean protein,  $\frac{1}{4}$  starchy foods, 1 serving of fruit, and 1 serving of dairy. In total this is about 3 to 4 carbohydrate choices which can help you keep to your diabetes plan without having to pull out your trusty measuring cups.

Fitting foods into your meals takes balance and practice. The tips listed are just a few of the many ways to enjoy the holidays without guilt. If you would like to know more about diabetes and how to manage your health and food choices contact Jackie McLaughlin, Bell County Extension Agent at 254.933.5305 or [jackie.mclaughlin@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:jackie.mclaughlin@ag.tamu.edu) Classes for diabetes education are available in both English and Spanish.

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