

Nutrition and Dietetics

Healthy Eating at Christmas



A information leaflet with helpful tips and advice to help you cut down on calories and enjoy a healthier Christmas.

Date of publication: December 2011

Date for review: December 2013

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Christmas would not be the same without eating and drinking a little bit more than usual but you can make sensible choices and still enjoy all your festive favourites.

All the tips and recipes in this leaflet are suitable for people who are watching their weight, looking after their heart or who have diabetes

Leading up to Christmas

It is easy to overindulge with all the extra food around. The best option is to enjoy Christmas day and Boxing day but avoid eating extra food leading up to, and after Christmas.

Also try not to buy too much extra food and alcohol, which will still be lingering around into the New Year when you are trying to get back to normal.

If you have diabetes, it may also be worth reminding relatives and friends that diabetic chocolates, mince pies and cakes are not recommended. These are expensive and it is actually better for you to have a small portion of the 'normal' food.

Modifying recipes to make them more healthy

The traditional turkey roast is already a good, healthy balanced meal but by preparing the meal slightly differently can make it much healthier.

- Increase the amount of fruit or vegetables used;
- Use the minimum amounts of fat and sugar. Choose monounsaturated fats such as olive oil, rapeseed oil, olive spread rapeseed oil based spreads or light spreads such as Olivio, Utterly Butterly or supermarkes own brand olive or rapeseed spread;
- Use only lean meats;
- Use low fat milk and other dairy products in cooking;
- Try substituting white for wholemeal varieties, for example crackers, breads, flours;
- Avoid adding meat juices to gravy or sauces;
- Reduce the fat in white sauce by using skimmed / semi-skimmed milk instead of whole milk;
- Thicken sauce with plain flour / corn flour instead of butter roux;
- Use half fat cheese or a similar quantity of strongly flavoured cheese to make cheese sauces;

- Try granulated artificial sweetener as an alternative to sugar.

Meals to choose which are healthier options

Starters

- Prawn cocktail served with a low fat dressing or a squeeze of lemon on a bed of salad;
- Low fat dip with wholemeal bread, pitta or crackers;
- Melon boat served on its own or with raspberries or grapes;
- Soups: avoid creamy soups and go for a tomato based soup, vegetable, minestrone or broth.

Healthy swaps:

Stop: pastry tartlet (245kcal, 3.2g fat).

Swap for mini filo tartlet (190kcal, 1.5g fat).

Stop: five breaded chicken bites (240kcal, 2g fat).

Swap for five marinated chicken bites (180kcal, 0.8g fat).

Stop: salmon and cream cheese bites (30kcal, 2.5g each fat).

Swap for salmon sushi bites (28kcal, trace fat each).

Recipe: Merry fruit salad (serves two)

Take:

- 125g low fat cream cheese;
- Grated zest of one lemon;
- Juice of one orange;
- 2 tbsp cointreau or other orange liqueur;
- Granulated artificial; sweetener to taste;
- Serve with any chopped fruit, such as Grapes, melon and apples;

Stir all together and serve.

Main courses

Roast turkey dinner

Serve with lean turkey, small pouring of gravy, boiled potatoes, mashed potatoes with skimmed milk or potatoes roasted in minimal olive oil. Add half a plate of boiled or steamed vegetables.

Avoid sausages, sausages wrapped in bacon or sausage stuffing as these are high in fat. Ready mixed stuffing is generally low in fat if oil is not added.

Cranberry glazed pork

Trim the fat off and glaze with cranberry sauce. Serve with plenty of vegetables, boiled potatoes and extra cranberry sauce (watch out for the sugar content of the sauce if you are diabetic).

Baked seabass or salmon

Serve with steamed rice and vegetables.

Parsnips, chestnut and cranberry loaf

Serve with winter steamed vegetables.

Baked squash

Serve with festively spiced cous cous and seasonal vegetables.

Recipe: Stuffing Balls (serves four)

Take:

- Two shallots or one small onion, chopped;
- Four rashers or lean bacon, chopped;
- 45g button mushrooms, diced;
- 1tbsp monounsaturated margarine (olive/rapeseed);
- Two thick slices of white bread, diced;
- 1tbsp chopped fresh parsley;
- Salt and pepper;

1. Preheat the oven to 200oC / gas mark 6/400oF. Gently fry shallots, bacon and mushrooms in 1 tsp of olive oil for five minutes.
2. With a slotted spoon transfer them into a bowl, draining the excess fat.
3. Pour out fat from the frying pan and add margarine. Fry the bread until golden brown.
4. Add the bread to bacon mixture and stir in parsley.
5. Add salt and pepper to taste.
6. Let cook then divide into balls.
7. Cook for about 50 minutes or until starting to crisp up.

Snacks

Healthier snacks to choose include;

- Vegetable sticks with low fat dips;
- Fruit kebabs;
- Baked spiced fruit slices;
- Cottage cheese and pineapple chunks;
- Low fat cottage cheese and chive devilled eggs;
- Bread sticks;
- Popcorn;
- Salads.

Nuts

If you are watching your weight, have snacks in moderation, as these can be high in calories, fat and salt, and add up easily.

If you are not watching your weight unsalted nuts are a good option as some are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which help protect the heart. Nuts are also an excellent source of B vitamins, as well as iron, zinc and potassium.

Healthy swaps

Stop: mini onion bhaji (64kcal, 2.8g fat).

Swap for mini satay stick (34kcal, 1.6g fat).

Stop: prawn toast (53kcal, 4.1g fat).

Swap for prawn wonton (35kcal, 2.3g fat).

Stop: 30g handful of ready salted crisps (155kcal, 9.7g fat).

Swap for 30g handful of tortilla chips (147kcal, 7.3g fat).

Stop: two cheese straws (100kcal, 6.4g fat).

Swap for one large breadstick (25kcal, 0.4g fat).

Puddings and desserts

Healthier desserts to choose include:

- Fruit salad (if tinned have it in juices not syrup);
- Plain ice cream;
- Small portion of Christmas pudding, without cream or brandy butter;
- Sugar free jellies;
- Sugar free whip;
- Low fat fromage frais is a good alternative to evaporated milk or cream;
- Use skimmed / semi skimmed milk to make custard;
- If making desserts use monounsaturated margarines.

Healthy swaps

Stop: 100g luxury sherry trifle (235kcal, 17.5g fat).

Swap for 100g satsumas in 15ml brandy (69kcal, trace fat).

Stop: three pieces of chocolate orange (139kcal, 7.9g fat).

Swap for three sticks of chocolate-covered orange peel (90kcal, 3.9g fat).

Stop: one marzipan fruit (51kcal, 1.7g fat).

Swap for one fruit jelly (39kcal, 0g fat).

Recipe: Low Fat Christmas Cake

- 225g of pre-soaked prunes, pitted;
- 115g cooking apple, grated;
- 175g dark muscovado sugar;
- Four eggs, beaten;
- Zest of one lemon and one orange;
- 175g self-raising flour, sifted;
- 1tbsp mixed spice;
- 50g sunflower seeds;
- 225g currants;

- 225g sultanas;
 - 225g raisins;
 - 115g glacé cherries;
 - 120ml brandy;
 - 2tbsp apricot jam, to glaze.
1. Preheat the oven to 170°C/325°F/gas 3. Line a cake tin with parchment paper.
 2. In a large mixing bowl mix together the prunes and apple. Add the sugar, then beat in the eggs a little at a time. Press down to squash the prunes.
 3. Mix in the lemon and orange zest, then carefully fold in the flour, spice, sunflower seeds and dried fruit.
 4. Gradually stir in the brandy, then pour into the prepared cake tin.
 5. Using the back of a metal spoon, make a slight dip in the centre to allow for an even top once baked. Bake for two to two and a half hours or until a metal skewer inserted into the cake comes out clean. Cool on a wire rack. Remove the parchment paper and brush with warmed apricot jam.

Recipe: Baked Pears with Cranberries and Walnuts

- Three ripe but firm pears, peeled, cored and quartered;
- 1/3 cup pomegranate juice;
- 1/2 cup dried cranberries;
- 1/4 cup chopped walnuts.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place quartered pears in a baking dish. Drizzle pomegranate juice over pears.

Sprinkle cranberries and walnuts over the top. Bake for 20 minutes, or until pears are tender. Serve with juices and fat-free or low fat vanilla yogurt.

Alcohol

The recommended daily units for men is three to four, and for women is two to three per day, with two to three alcohol free days a week. There are lots of calories in alcohol.

If you are out:

- Ask for a small glass of wine – that can be one and a half units of alcohol.
- Drink spritzers if you like wine, or pints of shandy if you are a lager drinker.
- Opt for half pints if you prefer higher strength lager .
- Alternate alcoholic drinks with soft drinks.

At home:

If you're pouring your own drinks at home, it's easy to drink more than you would usually. Here are some tips to help you keep track of your intake.

- Measure spirits instead of free pouring them.
- If you drink wine at home, pour small amounts into your glass. If you fill glasses to the rim, you'll be drinking more than you realise.
- Let guests pour their own drinks. If your half-full glass is constantly topped up, it's hard to keep track of how much you are drinking.

How many units in a drink?

1 =	 A small bottle (275ml) of lower strength (4%) alcopop	 A half pint of lower strength (4%) lager, beer or cider	 A single measure of spirit (40%)	
2 =	 A standard glass (175ml) of lower strength (12%) wine or champagne	 A pint of lower strength (4%) lager, beer or cider	 A 440ml can of medium strength (4.5%) lager, beer or cider	 A double measure of spirit (40%)
3 =	 A pint of medium strength (5%) lager, beer or cider	 A large glass (250ml) of low strength (12%) lager, beer or cider	 A large bottle (750ml) of lower strength (4%) alcopop	
4 =	 A large bottle (750ml) of higher strength (5.5%) alcopop	 A 500ml can of high strength (7.5%) lager, beer or cider		

Eggnog:

- Use mostly egg whites or egg substitute instead of whole eggs.
- Use fat-free half and half or evaporated fat-free milk instead of their whole milk counterparts.
- Substitute rum extract for the alcohol if you want the taste without the effect.

Activity

Don't be a couch potatoes and have a walk about after your meals, but leave it three to four hours after a large meal. This will help with digestion and burn off extra calories.

**If you have any queries please contact
a dietitian at Bedford Hospital on 01234 792171 or
email dietetics@bedfordhospital.nhs.uk**