

Diabetes Party Plan

From now through January 1, food isn't just food. It's a delicious experience loaded with tradition and temptation. It's tough managing the onslaught of festive favorites, such as mashed potatoes, stuffing, casseroles and dessert. But for the 30 million Americans with diabetes, the holiday season can be especially challenging.

"Diabetes doesn't go away just because it's the holidays," says Miranda Aitken, Program Coordinator of the Diabetes Education Center at HealthAlliance of the Hudson Valley.

But you can keep your blood sugar reasonably well-controlled while enjoying



Eugene Heslin, M.D.



Miranda Aitken, M.S., RNC, CDE

yourself. "The key is to plan ahead about how you'll manage it all," says Aitken, a master's-prepared certified registered nurse and certified diabetes educator. These party strategies can help you keep your health on track without feeling deprived.

PARTY SMARTS

Keep close tabs on your blood sugar.

"Don't throw out your diabetes management plan, but acknowledge that you will eat foods that you don't normally and at irregular times too," says Dr. Eugene Heslin, Medical Director for outpatient diabetes at HealthAlliance.

To keep your blood sugar under control during party

season, monitor your blood sugar daily and talk with your healthcare team to develop a plan to compensate for indulging. "Their guidelines can act as guardrails to keep your blood sugar in the middle of the road," Dr. Heslin says. That could mean adjusting your diet the next day or your insulin dosages, if possible.

Use delay tactics. At parties, don't go straight to food and drinks. Instead, grab a glass of seltzer and mingle. "Focus on your family and friends," Aitken says. The longer you put off eating and drinking, the less time you'll have to overindulge. If you choose to drink, be careful and drink only in moderation. "Alcohol combined with some diabetes medication can lower your blood sugar," Aitken says.

Plan your splurges. Focus on foods you should eat. "At meals, fill at least half your plate with salads and nonstarchy vegetables, such as salad, carrots or broccoli," Aitken says. These don't raise blood sugar quickly. Then reserve one-fourth of your plate for starchy foods, such as sweet potatoes or green bean casserole.



November is National Diabetes Month

It's a great time of year to make an appointment with an ophthalmologist for a dilated eye exam and with your primary care doctor for a glycated hemoglobin (HbA1c) and other tests that can indicate if your diabetes is well controlled. "The goal is to live a long, healthy life without complications," Dr. Heslin says. Knowing where you stand can help you make decisions about how to better manage your diabetes and stay motivated to keep up the good work.

5

Immunity-Boosting Foods

Fill the remaining fourth with lean meat, such as roast turkey.

If it's your usual meal time, try to eat the same amount of carbohydrate you'd usually have. But when dinner is later than usual, nibble on veggies to tide yourself over. If you're looking forward to dessert, have less of the green bean casserole (or another carbohydrate) during the main course. Eat slowly and say no to seconds.

Provide healthy options. If you're hosting, still offer high-carb holiday favorites, such as scalloped potatoes and stuffing, and send leftovers home with friends and family. But provide plenty of nonstarchy vegetables dishes too. "Cauliflower is a great substitute for potatoes in casseroles," Aitken says. As a guest, offer to bring a dish that fits into your meal plan. "You'll know there will be at least one healthy option," Aitken says.

Exercise daily. Physical activity helps lower blood sugar. If you're shopping, walk an extra lap or two around the mall before entering a store. Or complete your workout first thing in the morning.

Get back on track. If you over-indulge, don't convince yourself that you can keep doing it. Instead, "go into a no-guilt zone and go right back to your regular diabetes-friendly lifestyle," Dr. Heslin says.

For more on managing diabetes, attend HealthAlliance's monthly diabetes education seminar from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. on the third Wednesday of the month. For details, contact Cynthia Bell at the Diabetes Education Center, 845-334-4249, ext. 1.

Cold and flu season is upon us, but that doesn't mean you're destined to get sick. Build up your defenses now so that you can fend off germs when they attack. Fill your plate with immunity-boosting foods to increase your chances of staying healthy all season long. Here are some examples:



1

BELL PEPPERS

A green or red bell pepper has about as much vitamin C as a glass of orange juice, if not more. Vitamin C helps make antibodies, natural infection-fighters in your blood.



2

SWEET POTATOES

Sweet potatoes are the best food source of vitamin A. Vitamin A helps keep your immune system working properly. You can also find vitamin A in carrots, dark leafy greens and squash.



3

OATMEAL

This breakfast staple is a good source of the carbohydrate beta-glucan. Your body does not naturally contain beta-glucan. This activates your immune system so it is ready to battle germs.



4

BEEF

Beef is high in two nutrients essential for a strong immune system: zinc and protein. It provides half the daily recommended amount of zinc. Since red meat can be high in unhealthy saturated fat, it's best to limit how much you eat, and choose lean cuts.



5

YOGURT

Probiotics are beneficial bacteria that live in your gut. Studies show that taking probiotics decreases the odds of having an upper respiratory tract infection or common cold. Probiotics may also shorten the number of days you have a cold, if you do catch one. Yogurt can be a good source of probiotics. Look for the words "live and active cultures" on the label to ensure the yogurt contains probiotics.