

## 15 Tips to Decrease Holiday Overeating

By Michelle May, M.D.

Do you anticipate the holidays but dread the "inevitable" holiday overeating? Do your holiday events revolve around eating more than the meaning, people, presents, decorations, or travel?

These 15 holiday eating tips will help you enjoy the season more while eating mindfully.

1. It's easier to get distracted from signals of physical hunger and satiety at social gatherings, especially if food is the main event. Make an effort to pay close attention to your body's signals.
2. Be a food snob. Skip the store-bought goodies, the dried-out fudge and the so-so stuffing. If the food you select doesn't taste as good as you expected, stop eating it and choose something else. Think how much less you'd eat if you only ate things that tasted fabulous!
3. Think of your appetite as an expense account. How much do you want to spend on appetizers or the entrée? Do you want to save some room for dessert? Go through this process mentally to avoid eating too much food and feeling uncomfortable for the rest of the evening.
4. Pace your eating prior to the event so you'll be hungry but not famished at mealtime. But please, ignore the old diet advice of "eat before you go to a party so you won't be tempted." That's absurd! You want to be hungry enough to enjoy your favorites.
5. Socialize away from the sight of the food. Many people are "food suggestible" so just hanging around food may cause

you to eat more than you need.

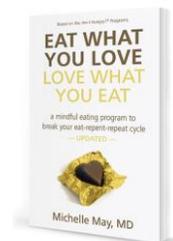
6. Survey all the food at a buffet before making your choices. Choose the foods you really want most at that time and remind yourself that you can have the other foods at a later time.
7. If the food is so special, give it your full attention rather than eating on autopilot. Eat mindfully by reducing distractions and sitting down to eat - even if it's just a cookie. Appreciate the appearance and aroma of your food and savor one small bite at a time by putting your fork down.



8. If the food doesn't taste as good as you expected, stop eating it and choose something else.
9. Since the duration of the meal tends to be extended at social events, you may need to have your plate taken away (or put your napkin on it) once you are satisfied to avoid nibbling unconsciously.
10. Be aware of the effects of alcohol on your awareness and food intake.
11. Be cautious of *obligatory eating*—eating just because it's on the table, on your plate, because you paid for it, it's free, or because someone made it. Deal with "food pushers" with a polite but firm, "No thank you." If you're concerned about hurting their feelings, ask for the

recipe or a small portion to take home with you for another meal.

12. Avoid eating food just because it's there. Grazing unconsciously leads to fullness from food that you probably won't even remember enjoying.
  13. Before having a cookie, a piece of fudge or other holiday treat, check your hunger level. When you choose a favorite food to satisfy you, try to sit down and eat it mindfully—without guilt.
  14. At restaurants, the portion sizes are usually large and often "two for the price of one." Consider appetizer portions, co-order and co-eat with your dining partners, or have the server package up your meal to go as soon as you feel satisfied. Remember, "super-size" is no bargain if you didn't need that much food in the first place!
  15. Look for opportunities for enjoyable movement. Take a walk after dinner to enjoy the lights, take a few laps around the mall before it opens to do some window shopping, or take guests to see local attractions.
- Most important, delight *all* your senses. Enjoy the atmosphere, the company, the entertainment, and the traditions as much, if not more, than the food.



Michelle May, M.D. is a recovered yoyo dieter and the award-winning author of *Eat What You Love, Love What You Love*. Download:

<http://amihungry.com/chapter1>