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# News

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\*\*\*\*\*Registered dietitian gives holiday food alternatives.

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DALLAS--The holidays are probably the time of year when the battle of the bulge wages its most widespread campaign. Food seems to be everywhere. And lots of food means lots of calories. But nutrition is more than just counting calories and serving a hot meal. Webster's Dictionary talks about food as "promoting growth and replacing worn or injured tissue."

The typical way of life adopted for this time of year is often not conducive to good eating habits. Small meals are eaten to make room for "nibbling" at a cocktail party--often more calories ingested in the long run. Meals are skipped because of too much cookie, cake and pie sampling. The result: too many calories, too few nutrients.

I certainly am not advocating abolition of these festive times of year, but perhaps moderation is the key word here. Eat the foods you want but eat smaller amounts. And instead of loading foods with "empty calories"--sugar, chocolate, candy--use raisins, nuts, other dried fruits. Not only will your goodies be a little more unusual, they'll also be more healthy.

Examples:

- raisin oatmeal cookies instead of chocolate chips
- pumpkin bread instead of cinnamon coffee cake
- cottage cheese dip instead of sour cream
- raw vegetables instead of chips and dip
- apple cider instead of eggnog

Christmas dinner doesn't have to mean turkey, ham or roast beef. For a variety of reasons, many have chosen to follow vegetarian principles in their eating. The important point to remember is that animal proteins are complete, whereas plant proteins are incomplete and must be eaten in combinations. This assures that all amino acids--the building blocks of proteins--are present at the same time, to allow the body to make new protein. The body can't make new protein unless all the necessary amino acids are present together.

Examples for vegetarian diets:

- baked beans and brown bread instead of soda crackers and onion dip
- bean stroganoff instead of roast beef
- yogurt with granola instead of vanilla ice cream with chocolate sauce
- bran muffins instead of brown and serve rolls
- hoppin' john instead of champagne and caviar

Not only is it important for those of us without medical problems to eat well, but it is also equally if not more important for those with medical problems to remain well-nourished. Persons with diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disease have a particularly difficult time resisting temptation.

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first add holiday food

For a variety of reasons, a low sodium diet may be prescribed--high blood pressure, alcoholic liver disease, congestive heart failure. Most of us consume more sodium than we need anyway, and decreasing intake can't hurt. For those on blood pressure lowering medicines it's even more important. The diet and the drugs work together to help achieve normal blood pressure.

Examples:

- natural cheese instead of processed
- squares of bread instead of salty snack crackers
- dry white wine instead of a Bloody Mary
- lemon juice, poultry seasoning oil instead of meat tenderizer, seasoned salt pork
- pork roast instead of ham

Noncompliance--or "cheating"--on a diabetic diet can show up in a number of ways--spot checks indicating more sugar than usual in the urine, increasing blood sugar levels, and symptoms of hyperglycemia (headache, thirst, nausea, vomiting, excessive urination). One way to normalize the rising blood sugar level is to give more insulin, but this only promotes more weight gain. The best remedy is to continue trying to follow the diet.

Examples:

- mashed sweet potatoes instead of candies yams
- whole fresh cranberries instead of cranberry jelly
- pumpkin custard instead of pumpkin pie
- pound cake instead of fruitcake
- biscuits (cornbread) instead of stollen (German Christmas bread)

The words cholesterol, saturated fat, polyunsaturated fat have become very popular today. Concern over blood cholesterol and lipid levels as well as prevention of heart disease has led to many changes in eating habits. Unlike diabetes, where sugar intake is immediately detected, or hypertension where sodium intake is rapidly manifested as increased blood pressure or weight gain, the effects of eating high saturated fat/high cholesterol foods often take years to notice. However, for those already needing these dietary modifications, it's important not to slide back into old bad habits. And for the sake of prevention, the rest of us will also benefit by these changes.

Examples:

- turkey instead of ham or roast beef
- eggnog with imitation eggs
- tacos with turkey and mozzarella cheese instead of with beef and cheddar cheese
- pretzels and plain popcorn instead of corn chips and potato chips
- cocoa powder and margarine instead of chocolate

The most important point of all is to keep weight gain to a minimum. Not only does it make clothes feel a little snug, but it also can have harmful side effects for a pre-existing medical condition. Check with your doctor before making changes in your drugs. Check with your dietitian before making changes in your diet.

Happy Holidays!

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