

Diabetes and Thanksgiving can live in harmony

November 25 2014, by Melissa Wdowik

As you may know, November is National Diabetes Month. If you, a loved one, or a Thanksgiving guest have diabetes or prediabetes, this column is dedicated to you, as you may be wondering how to enjoy one of the most food-laden holidays of the year. Fortunately, you can have your pie and eat it, too.

Do not feel like you have to create a whole new Thanksgiving meal or special diabetic side dishes. It is a myth that people with diabetes have to follow a special diet. In fact, a healthful [diabetes diet](#) is the same healthful diet we should all eat: lean proteins, whole grains, low-fat dairy, whole fruit, healthy fats, and lots of non-starchy vegetables. Luckily, many holiday staples are nutritious, including sweet potatoes, green beans, cranberries, and turkey. By slightly modifying traditional recipes, we can include less sugar and processed carbohydrates, which is better for all of us. We can all benefit from smaller portions, too, so even the [pumpkin pie](#) has a place at the table.

Use these tips to make the holiday lighter and more festive for everyone:

- Nibble on light appetizers, if any, in anticipation of the feast. Save the deviled eggs and cheese cubes for another time, and snack instead on crudité's, raw vegetables in a variety of beautiful colors, shapes, and arrangements.
- Set the table with small plates. The larger your plate is, the more likely you are to fill it.
- Choose smaller portions of the foods you love. One scoop of

mashed potatoes can be just as fulfilling as two, with perhaps a little less gravy than usual.

- Serve roasted green beans along with your green bean casserole if you would like to please traditionalists and still offer a healthy alternative for those who want it.
- Easily modify recipes without sacrificing flavor. For example, make cranberry sauce with ½ the sugar called for in the recipe, and make stuffing with broth instead of butter.
- Bake stuffing in a casserole dish rather than cooking it inside the bird.
- Skip extras that are available year-round, such as bread.
- Lighten up the pie (for example, using fat-free evaporated milk) or leave behind the crust. You can enjoy dessert by choosing what and how much to eat.
- Eat mindfully! Before putting food in your mouth, use your senses of sight and smell to appreciate it. Then eat leisurely, putting down utensils between bites, chewing slowly, and taking the time to fully enjoy every taste (and your holiday company).
- Look forward to leftovers. By reminding yourself that you can enjoy every dish again tomorrow, you are less likely to overeat it today.
- Get outside and walk! Bundle up if you must, and take mini walks throughout the day, especially after dinner.

For more insight into controlling your [diabetes](#) without it controlling you, watch for the Kendall Anderson Nutrition Center's upcoming Dining with Diabetes program. In the meantime, Happy Thanksgiving!

Provided by Colorado State University

Citation: Diabetes and Thanksgiving can live in harmony (2014, November 25) retrieved 30 January 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-11-diabetes-thanksgiving->

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