‘TIS THE SEASON TO BE HEALTHY!

Holiday cheer brings around memories of warm comfort foods like hot chocolate, pumpkin spice, casseroles, and our favorite family recipes. Whether you’re preparing a meal for your family or bringing a dish to a potluck, be sure to make healthy choices so you can splurge on an extra (small) serving of your favorite dish! Follow some of these tips to make sure you get to enjoy your food while making smart choices!

- Don’t go to a party hungry—you’ll likely overeat. Eat a healthy snack beforehand or drink water before and during the meal. If you splurged a little, exercise a little more to burn off the extra calories.
- Everything might look good, but start off with small portions and only get second helpings of dishes that you really enjoyed.
- Fats provide the most calories so try to limit saturated fats from foods like the skin on lean meats, condiments like mayonnaise, heavy sauces, and desserts with a lot of butter or sugar.
- Use or suggest options that are “low” or “reduced” such as low-fat gravy, reduced sodium chicken broth, or low-fat cheeses and milk.
- Try adjusting recipes by lowering the amount of sugar or butter called for or season with natural herbs and spices such as cinnamon and pumpkin spice.
- Make sure to provide lots of fruits and vegetables; these are naturally lower in calories and taste delicious without a lot of extra seasonings. Put out veggie trays and healthy dips, make casseroles (sweeten with orange juice and cinnamon), use fruits as desserts, and add things like beans and spinach to stews, salads, and side dishes.
- Lastly, eat what you love and love what you eat—just in moderation!

Don’t forget about MyPlate! Adults and children over 2 years old can follow these tips! Make half your plate fruits and vegetables!

Did you know?
The average American gains about one pound during the holiday season. That doesn’t sound like a lot but it can add up year after year! (Balfanz, Stanford University)

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Holiday celebrations bring family and friends together. It’s about the memories and time spent, not the gifts. Consider a family gift exchange!

Parenting Tip of the Month

Whether your child is on the naughty or nice list, think of ways for your whole family to enjoy the celebrations and the time spent with each other. You can even sit down with everyone and discuss their reasons for celebrating, their favorite parts of the holiday season, what they’re thankful for, or how to appreciate the holidays if they don’t get the presents on their list. Here are some questions that might help with the discussion:

1) Do you have any activities that you’d like to do during your Christmas break?

2) Did you ever think about families that might not get a lot of presents for the holidays? How would you feel if you only got 1 present?

Beware of holiday spending too!

From Black Friday sales to stocking up for Christmas presents, the holidays may put us all at risk for overspending. Before you charge everything on a credit card, make sure to create a budget to see who you need to buy items for and how much you can afford for each person. Once you have this list and budget in place, follow these tips for stress-free holiday shopping.

- Make sure to follow your budget and set limits for each present so you don’t exceed the total amount you set aside for gifts.
- Look for the sales in newspaper ads or online! Consider alternative gifts in case other things are on sale.
- Compare prices at different stores before you buy. Regular prices may be cheaper than sale prices at another store.
- If you purchase items from the internet, check if there is a closed padlock icon or “https://” in the address bar. This ensures a secure connection to prevent identity theft.
- Paying with cash helps to stay within your budget, but if you use your credit card, make sure to pay it off the next month to prevent debt building up.

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For more information, contact Whitney Fung, Family & Consumer Sciences Agent, at (863) 519-1072 or whitney-mfung@ufl.edu