

*Happy Thanksgiving
from AOA!*



Five Tips for a Healthier Thanksgiving
by The American Institute for Cancer Research

Looking for ways to keep from piling on the food and the pounds over the holidays? Here are five things to keep in mind before, during, and after next week's big gathering.

Tip # 1: Vary it Up

As you go about planning the big meal, here's food for thought:

Thanksgiving means traditional food served in traditional ways, so if you go about making wholesale changes – even healthy ones – you're liable to hear about it. Cooks who're looking to get innovative with holiday meals (while avoiding the grumbling of traditionalist in-laws) can adopt the **80-20 Rule**: 80 percent tried-and-true to 20 percent fun-and-new.

As for what to do with that 20 percent: Try adding new flavors and boosting the cancer-protective potential of your feast by simply expanding your produce repertoire. Every vegetable and fruit you add, after all, contains a unique blend of compounds, many of which display potent health-protective power.

The Good News: Our expert report linked diets high in certain vegetables with lower risk of several types of cancer. Those vegetables specifically linked to lower cancer risk are the **non-starchy** kind.

But remember, in a balanced diet, there's plenty of room for potatoes, peas and other starchy vegetables. They provide many nutritional benefits. Potatoes, for example, supply almost twice the potassium of a banana. Starchy vegetables also provide dietary fiber, which may play a role in colon cancer prevention.

It's an over-reliance on starchy vegetables that's really the issue. So take a look at your typical, non-Thanksgiving-Day diet: If you consistently favor starchy vegetables like potatoes and peas over non-starchy options like broccoli and kale, your diet may lack many vitamins, nutrients and phytochemicals.

And if, like most Americans, you routinely add generous amounts of fat and salt to your starchy vegetables, you may want to view this Thanksgiving as an opportunity to break out of the habit.

So use the 80-20 rule (or if you're feeling bold, even the 70-30 rule): Try to incorporate a wider color palate in the dishes you prepare. Seek out boldly colored vegetables and fruits – look for reds/purples, brilliant yellows and deep greens.

Visit AICR's Recipe Corner for inspiration or new recipes.

Top Tip: Try sweet potatoes instead of white potatoes this year. Yes, they're just as starchy as their white cousins – but the report found that foods high in **beta carotene** and **vitamin C** were linked with a decreased risk of some cancers, and sweet potatoes fit that bill nicely.

Tip # 2: Start with a Starter

Starting the Thanksgiving meal with a soup or a mixed salad will help you fill up on low-calorie foods. Why is that a good idea? Because you'll tend to eat less of the calorie-packed fare that makes up the main course.

Researchers at Pennsylvania State University successfully tested this strategy. When scientists gave women broth-based chicken-and-rice soup before their meals, they ended up eating fewer calories in their overall meals than when they were given a higher calorie first course (a chicken-rice casserole).

Not just any soup or salad will do, however. Creamy soups and meaty stews tend to be higher in calories, which defeats the purpose, so opt instead for tasty, broth-based varieties that are loaded with more vegetables than fat. Try any low fat soup. For Thanksgiving, you might like butternut squash and mushroom soup made with low fat, reduced-sodium broth. When it's not a holiday, low fat minestrone or tomato soups are examples of good choices. You'll find a wide variety of easy, healthy soup recipes at AICR's *Recipe Corner*.

Another study, in which subjects first ate a large salad composed of vegetables, a small amount of cheese and fat-free dressing, showed that this strategy was also effective. Subjects ate fewer calories during the whole meal, compared to another group of women who started with salads loaded with generous amounts of cheese and creamy salad dressing.

So if you're not a soup fan, try starting off your Thanksgiving meal with a salad featuring dark leafy greens, non-starchy vegetables and vinaigrette dressing. You'll feel less inclined to load up on high-calorie foods when you get to the main feast, and your waistline will thank you for it.

Top Tip: Start the Thanksgiving meal with a soup or a mixed salad.

Other ideas:

- Start off with a cup of fresh fruit salad.
- Mix some chunks of delicious fall fruits like pears or apples into your green salad, or toss in a handful of dried cranberries.

AICR's *Recipe Corner* features dozens of tantalizing salad recipes that could precede your Thanksgiving entree.

Tip # 3: Pick the Perfect Portion

Thanksgiving meals can cause even the most health-conscious waistline-watcher to lower his or her guard. With so many delicious dishes to choose from, it's always tempting to try a little—or a lot—of each one.

Nevertheless, our expert report made something unavoidably clear: Carrying excess body fat increases cancer risk. So this time of year, when temptation beckons, and holiday meals start coming fast and furious, it's especially important to maintain a healthful diet.

The best way to stay on track without depriving yourself? Portion control.

Top Tips: Try these tricks to help you make better choices at the holiday table:

- **Please Wait to be Seated:** Instead of grazing before the meal, wait until the meal begins.
- **Fool the Eye, Fool the Stomach:** Pick a smaller plate so modest portions can create the illusion of a loaded plate.
- **No Seconds, Just Firsts:** Keep serving platters off the table, making it more difficult to go for seconds. Handle your own servings so you can control what you choose, and how much.
- **Out of Sight, Off the Hips:** Make desserts less tempting by covering them with foil, not plastic wrap.
- **Carrots to the Front, Stuffing to the Back:** Keep healthier foods nearby and at the front of the refrigerator while hiding higher calorie, less nutrient-dense foods toward the back.

Tip # 4: Burn Off the Bird

It's tough for many of us to find time for ourselves during the holiday season. So this Thanksgiving, get the holidays off to a healthy start by starting up a new tradition: the postprandial constitutional.

That is to say: take an after-dinner walk.

After the dishes have been cleared – but before the pie and coffee – is a perfect time to push yourself away from the table, throw on a jacket and take a stroll around your neighborhood.

Not convinced you should take a Turkey Day stroll? Consider the following:

1. **It'll Clear Your Head.** Thanksgiving means family, and family can mean noise. Give yourself permission to take a brief break from the crowd for a quiet, bracing walk in the crisp November air.
2. **It's Better Than Sitting There.** AICR recommends being active every day, in any way, for 30 minutes or more, and on Thanksgiving, that can be particularly tough. (No, lifting your fork to your mouth – no matter how many reps you complete – doesn't count as physical activity.) A brisk, heart-pumping, calorie-burning walk is a great way to keep on track.
3. **Catch Up with Your Cousin.** If there's a relative you don't often see, and haven't had a chance to spend time with, why not invite him or her along?

4. **Your Stomach Will Thank You.** You've just eaten a sizeable amount of food in one sitting. A walk helps keep your digestive system...moving things along. If you know what we mean.
5. **Take Time to Be Thankful.** As you walk, odds are you'll spot several things to be thankful for. A picturesque sunset. Leaves that crunch under your feet. The first faint hint of snow in the air. Your own house, alive with light and warmth and people.

Top Tip: Try an after-dinner walk this Thanksgiving. You'll thank yourself for it when you're done.

Tip # 5: Above All: Don't Give Up if You Slip Up

A moment on the lips, a lifetime on the hips. Turns out that old adage is true. In fact, according to researchers, the average American adult gains one to two pounds per year. While that may not seem like a large gain annually, consider the effects of 10 or 20 years of accrued poundage and you quickly see where the trouble lies.

According to the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the six-week holiday season kicked off by Thanksgiving is prime time for weight gain. Faced with an abundance of sweets and alcohol and little time for a regular fitness routine, many of us notice a change when we step on the scale in January. Unfortunately, experts note, few adults successfully shed the pounds once the holidays pass.

But holiday weight gain is not inevitable. This year, try to avoid the all-or-nothing school of self-defeating thought. If you overate on Thanksgiving, relax. Don't berate yourself. Don't give up. Just forgive yourself, and get back on track.

Reduce your portion sizes for a day or two to compensate. If you missed your usual walk today, set aside some extra time tomorrow.

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