



## Tips on Holiday Eating & Kids' Health



It's that time again... the holiday season is a time for parties and celebrations. Getting together with family and friends means tables full of delicious holiday meals and treats. While many of the main courses and side dishes of the season are nutritious, most of the treats are full of sugar, fat and artificial additives. And while we grown ups know the difference between healthy and unhealthy foods (whether we choose it is another discussion altogether!!!) children can't help but want the treats. They are colorful and pretty and sweet and chewy, appealing to all the senses. By following some tips on holiday eating, we can help our families enjoy the season while keeping a balanced and healthy diet.

- ❖ ***Set a positive tone about food;*** don't label foods as good or bad. If foods are labeled as good or bad, then your child becomes good or bad because they ate the food.
- ❖ ***Set a tone of moderation*** that includes clear expectations. Tell the children it's fine to indulge, but that they should eat only one dessert per holiday event.
- ❖ ***Make it clear when treats are and are not allowed.*** Treats at parties and special events are fine, but discourage random sweets at home. Don't keep them in the house at all, even as decorations.
- ❖ ***Limit the empty calories of sugary drinks.*** Save those calories for cookies, cakes and pies, which are more likely to leave the children satisfied.
- ❖ When hosting a party, ***don't set out platters of goodies.*** This encourages eating to excess. Set out platters of healthy treats, but serve only individual portions of sweets. One option is to give each child a favor bag with individual portions of healthy and not-so-healthy treats.
- ❖ ***Never send a child to a party hungry.*** Give them a healthy snack before they leave the house.

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- ❖ ***Never use food as the focus of any children's event.*** Instead of a pizza party, have a bowling or craft party. Put the focus on the activity, not the edibles.
- ❖ ***Set and stick to a schedule of meals and snacks.*** Keeping a routine can help prevent all day snacking, especially during vacation days when there may be longer stretches of time at home.
- ❖ Accept that children will eat more than normal during the holiday season and instead of worrying about how much your child is eating, ***make efforts to increase physical activity*** and burn up the extra calories (children's physical fitness bottoms out this time of year). This doesn't mean sending the kids off to the gym every day. While a day on the ski slopes or at the skating rink is great, fitness can just be fun and games, too. Games such as *Hide and Seek*, *Simon Says* or *building pillow forts* in the living room, count in terms of burning calories.
- ❖ ***Set the right example.*** If we expect our children to be active, we need to be active too. Kids are full of energy this time of year; it's up to us to do something to redirect the energy and take some of the emphasis off the candy canes and gingerbread men.

*Source: Associated Press news story December 14, 2004, J.M. HIRSCH, Food Writer*