

MyPlate 4 Step Plan for the Holidays

The holidays are here! With all of the bustle and activity that accompanies this season, there is a good chance that it will be harder to stick to regular meal and exercise patterns. The good news is that, if you can remember MyPlate's most important messages, you will still be able to lower calories and eat healthier!

Here is how to adopt MyPlate's message about fruits and vegetables during the crazy holiday rush:

1. Fill half of your appetizer plates with vegetables. Check out the differences between these two plate options below...

Plate 1: 546 calories

- 4 mini quiche: 240 calories
- 2 slices of cheddar cheese: 226 calories
- 5 crackers: 80 calories

Plate 2: 145 calories

- 1 cup of carrots and celery: 25 calories
- 2 mini quiche: 120 calories

Visualize a plate before you eat snacks.

Are you zooming through the mall and tempted by large pretzels, cookies, and cinnamon rolls? These festive treats can really do a number on your waistline. We have become largely oblivious to oversized foods, so sidestep unhealthful options by picturing the item in question on a dinner plate. How much room does it occupy? If it takes up too much space, skip it. If you need a snack while you shop, bring along an apple or another piece of fruit that travels well.

2. Fill half your dessert plate with fruit.

Instead of loading your plate with pie, cake, brownies, and cookies, fill it up with fruit. You can leave room for a piece of a favorite treat too. Compare these two options...

Plate 1: 900 calories

- Slice of pecan pie: 500 calories
- 1 butter cookie: 200 calories
- 1 peppermint brownie: 200 calories

Plate 2: 290 calories

- 1 cup of fresh fruit: 90 calories
- 1 cookie or 1/2 of a pie slice: 200 calories



Hint: bring a beautiful fresh fruit salad to holiday potlucks so that this option is sure to be available.

3. Make a healthful plate for lunch and dinner.

No matter where you eat, using MyPlate's methods of portion control can help you reduce the number of calories you consume.

Plate 1: 900 Calories

1 big bowl of pasta with meatballs:
900 calories

Plate 2: MyPlate, 400 calories

1/4 of the plate has pasta, 1/4 of the plate contains meatballs, and the rest is brimming with fresh veggies (then you can meet your fruit/dairy requirements at dessert).

Make MyPlate at home, when you eat out, and when you are a guest somewhere else. Its approach works in the cafeteria, the food court, the drive through, and more!

4. Eat a healthful snack plate that is filled with fruits and veggies before you go to a party.

Okay, so we realize that it is not always easy to eat MyPlate at someone else's house or the office party. So here is one more strategy. Eat your MyPlate fruits and veggies before you go out. Have a small salad and a piece of fruit - that way when you go somewhere, you can have a smaller serving of what they are offering and still stay healthy.

Visit <http://choosemyplate.gov> for more information about MyPlate, and drop by <http://foodandhealth.com> for creative recipe ideas and other resources for a healthful lifestyle.