

Healthy Holiday Substitutions

During the holiday season, eating healthy can seem almost impossible. Between holiday gathers, family and work responsibilities, shopping and not enough sleep, the temptation to indulge in your favorite foods is hard to resist. Instead of feeling bad about making and eating your favorite foods, make some simple substitutions to make your dishes healthier and nutritious.

Flour – Try substituting whole wheat flour for half of the called for all-purpose flour in baked goods such as cakes and cookies. Whole grains provide many nutrients vital for health including fiber and B vitamins and minerals.

Cream – Top off holiday pies with frozen or low fat yogurt instead of whipped cream or ice cream. If the recipe calls for sour cream, use low-fat or fat free yogurt. This makes the snacks lower in fats and calories. Dairy products that retain their calcium content such as yogurt have calcium as well as potassium, Vitamin D and protein.

Seasoning Salt – When the recipe calls for seasoning salt such as celery salt or garlic salt, try using herb only seasoning such as garlic powder, celery seed, onion flakes or such. According to the 2005 Dietary Guidelines, a healthy adult should not exceed 2,300 milligrams (approximately 1 teaspoon) of sodium a day, however, many Americans consume twice that much.

Eggs – For cakes, cookies and quick breads try using egg whites or cholesterol free egg substitute instead of whole eggs. Two egg whites or ¼ cup cholesterol free egg substitute can be used in many recipes in place of one whole egg. One large egg has about 213 mg. of cholesterol which is all located in the yolk and it is recommended that healthy adults limit dietary cholesterol to less than 300 mg. per day. Egg whites contain no cholesterol.

Butter – For one cup of butter you can substitute 1 cup of margarine or 1 cup vegetable shortening (for baking). An equal amount of oil can be substituted for a similar portion of melted butter if the recipe calls for melted butter. You can tell if margarine is regular margarine by checking the Nutrition Facts one tablespoon will have 100 calories. If light or lower fat is used, you may be less successful substituting it for butter or for regular margarine in baking.

You can replace some of the fat and/sugar with applesauce or prune puree. However don't replace too much or it will get gummy.

Sugar - You can reduce the amount of table sugar in recipes for baked foods and desserts in a recipe by one-fourth to one-third. Add extra flavoring or spices to make a recipe taste sweeter. Adding vanilla will also make it sweeter.

You can replace some of the sugar with fruit juice or purees. However, don't add too much.

The National Institutes of Health say Americans gain about a pound every winter holiday season. Although one pound sounds small, over several years this adds up. Remember, obesity doesn't happen overnight, pounds accumulate slowly over time. So start a tradition this holiday season by getting creative and making your holiday recipes healthier through simple substitutions.