**9 Tips for a Healthier Thanksgiving**

It’s officially the start of the holiday season! Thanksgiving is a great holiday to bring together family, friends, and great food. However, if you have certain fitness goals that you are trying to achieve, the holidays can be a [stressful time](http://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/overcoming-holiday-stressors). Since Thanksgiving is all about food, it can be hard to fight temptation – and you might leave your family gathering feeling guilty.

We believe that it’s completely possible to have a satisfying and healthy Thanksgiving when you’re trying to maintain a healthy diet. Whether you’re the host or the attendee, check out some of the tips below to have a healthier Thanksgiving this year:

**Don’t skip meals.**

You might be tempted to skip breakfast and/or lunch for a 3PM feast in order to “save calories”. But trust us, that rarely works! Instead, your growling stomach will lead to overeating and overindulging on less healthy foods. Be sure to eat a nutritious breakfast full of whole grains, healthy fats, and veggies to keep you satisfied and less likely to overeat.

**Bring a healthy dish.**

If you’re bringing some food of your own, be sure to contribute a healthy dish! There are plenty of healthier versions of your favorite Thanksgiving recipes. Some of our favorites include:

* [Creamy Mashed Cauliflower](http://www.delish.com/cooking/recipe-ideas/recipes/a50786/mashed-cauliflower-recipe/)
* [Vegetable Gravy](http://www.delish.com/cooking/recipe-ideas/recipes/a50251/vegetable-gravy-recipe/)
* [Maple-Roasted Sweet Potatoes](http://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/252258/maple-roasted-sweet-potatoes/)
* [Healthy Green Been Casserole](http://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/250376/healthy-green-bean-casserole/)
* [Lemon-Garlic Roast Turkey](http://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/249763/lemon-garlic-roast-turkey-white-wine-gravy/)
* [Dirty Faro Stuffing](http://www.cookinglight.com/entertaining/holidays-occasions/thanksgiving-stuffing-recipes#dirty-farro-stuffing)
* [Mini Caramel Apples](https://www.popsugar.com/fitness/Healthy-Caramel-Apples-38511592)

**Plan ahead.**

Know what you’re going to eat before you arrive. Decide which foods are worth the indulgence and which aren’t. Consider making your plate before others do. That way, you won’t be tempted to eat the same portions as your family members are eating.

**Choose alcohol OR dessert.**

If you want to keep your calories in check while still enjoying some of your favorite Thanksgiving foods, choose between either indulging in a couple adult beverages *or* indulging in dessert. Both alcohol and sweets are filled with excessive amounts of calories and sugar. By sticking with one, you’ll help reduce your calorie and sugar intake.

**Use smaller plates.**

Trick your brain into thinking you’re eating more! Studies have found that people tend to eat less food when their plates are small. Small plates and bowls help you eat healthy portions and limit the amount of food you have immediate access to.

**Make time for some exercise.**

No more napping after turkey! One of the least healthy parts about Thanksgiving is that we tend lounge around watching football or a movie after a big meal. Be sure to get some sort of [physical activity](http://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/13-tips-to-stay-active-this-winter) in during the holiday. Play some football with the kids in the backyard, go for a walk after dessert, or spend some time outside if the weather permits.

**Decline leftovers.**

Thanksgiving leftovers can tempt you to keep indulging even after the holiday passes. Politely decline any leftovers if you feel they will interrupt your nutrition goals. If you’re the host, give out all of your leftovers to guests! (They’ll be thankful the extra leftovers, trust us!)

**Eat mindfully.**

Mindful eating will help you slow down and enjoy your food. It will also help prevent you from overeating. Eat slowly, put your fork down between bites, and focus on the tastes and textures of your food. Check out this [article](http://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/learn-how-to-eat-mindfully) to learn how to eat mindfully!

**Ditch the guilt.**

If you end up indulging a bit more than you were planning on, or feel guilty for adding that extra scoop of stuffing, be sure to ditch the guilt ASAP. Always remember that one holiday setback doesn’t have to completely ruin your fitness goals. Feeling guilty will only leave you feeling stressed and defeated. You deserve to enjoy your holiday!

Eating healthily shouldn’t mean skipping out on one of your favorite holidays! You can easily get yourself back on track by exercising a bit more the following week and saying no to any leftover goodies.

From all of us at TotalWellness, wishing you and your family a Happy Thanksgiving!