



'Tis the Season to Eat

MOODBOARD/THINKSTOCK

There's no shortage of good food this time of year, but these easy tips will make sure you don't end up stuffed like your Thanksgiving turkey.

Around the holiday time

there's always an abundance of food and drink and it's tough not to overindulge in the seemingly endless array of pumpkin pie, potatoes, alcohol, appetizers and baked goods.

But unfortunately, this is a time of year where those pounds that you've been able to lose and keep off start piling up on you. That calorie creep doesn't have to happen over a bunch of parties or family gatherings either. Sometimes all it takes is a single meal to throw a healthy diet off course.

The Calorie Control Council says the average American chows down as many as 4,500 calories at Thanksgiving dinner. That's nearly twice the amount of recommended calories in a single day!

But it doesn't have to be that way. There are ways you can still indulge in your Thanksgiving and holiday traditions without feeling like you ate your body weight in food.

Before Dinner

If yours is like many households, there are always countless yummy appetizers to choose from that can often leave you stuffed even before you sit down for your meal.

Try to have healthier snacks and appetizers that are low in carbohydrates such as raw vegetables and dip or a bowl of raw and

*by Joanne Smith,
CNP & Kylie
James, CNP*

ERNIEDECKER/THINKSTOCK



Spicy Salsa Dip

Ingredients:

- ½ tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 sweet onion, diced
- 1 yellow bell pepper, diced
- 5 cups fresh seeded diced tomatoes
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 2–4 chipotle chiles in adobo, minced
- 1 cayenne pepper, diced, if more heat is desired (optional)
- ¼ cup minced fresh basil (or cilantro)
- Juice from one lime
- ⅓ cup vinegar or ⅓ cup bottled lemon juice
- Salt and pepper
- ½ teaspoon cumin

Directions:

1. Heat oil in a large pan, add onions and peppers until soft, add garlic, cook 1 minute.
2. Add remaining ingredients and simmer 15–20 minutes to reduce liquid.
3. Adjust seasoning and place in hot washed jars.
4. Process for 15 minutes in a hot water bath to seal or refrigerate to be consumed within the week.

For a healthy pumpkin pie recipe, visit pvamag.com.



unsalted nuts and seeds. These are great because they're high in essential fats that can help give you that sense of satiety and help reduce the risk of overeating at the dinner table.

Spicy homemade salsa (check out the recipe at left) and/or guacamole and chips are great. Tomatoes and hot spices have fat-burning properties and can help boost metabolism, while guacamole contains good fats and is high in B vitamins.

The Calorie Control Council says the average American chows down as many as 4,500 calories at Thanksgiving dinner.

Shrimp is another great option as they're low in calories and don't raise insulin. Plus, if you dip them in your spicy salsa, you get the added boost to your metabolism. Smoked salmon and goat cheese on pumpernickel bread is another good munchie.

All these dishes are low-calorie, high in protein and nutrients and solid choices to avoid blood sugar spikes and insulin surges that contribute to weight gain and blood sugar imbalances.

What Are You Drinking?

If partaking in alcohol beverages, try to always have a glass of water in between each one.

This helps reduce the amount of alcohol, excess calories and sugar being consumed with your cocktail. Water can also help fill you up, so when it comes time for dinner you won't feel as hungry and won't eat as much.

Sipping on water with freshly squeezed lemon juice is even better. This stimulates





your digestive juices and stomach acid in preparation for dinner and can also help avoid some digestive issues that can occur after the meal.

Go Slow

When it actually comes time for dinner, don't try to test your plate's weight limit by cramming it with as much food as possible. This can cause you to eat more than you want in an attempt to join the clean plate club. Take smaller portions. You can always come back (but not for too much more) and make sure to eat slowly and chew your food well. The slower you eat, the easier you'll be able to recognize that you're full and will end up eating less.

If you're gulping down food your stomach doesn't have enough time to tell you, "that's enough," until it's too late. Eating quickly also means you're taking in a lot of air and that is taxing on your digestive system.

All that extra air can cause heartburn, belching, upset stomach and, of course, make you feel lethargic, fatigued and want to take a nap for that post-meal food coma.

Make sure to load up on the vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower and other greens. Keep those starchy carbohydrates like sweet potatoes and mashed potatoes to much smaller portions on your plate.

Those carbs will cause unwanted insulin surges, which is a problem with individuals with a spinal-cord injury, as your body often has a difficult time metabolizing carbohydrates.

Soup It Up

After Thanksgiving there are usually leftovers and who doesn't enjoy a good turkey sandwich in the days after the big meal?

However, bread, especially white bread, is an easy way to add excess calories to your diet. A much better way to make use of your leftover turkey is in a soup. Not only can you potentially include some of your leftover



FUDIO/THINKSTOCK

vegetables in it, but it's low in carbohydrates and calories and a great way to get your eight cups of water a day. Don't overdo it on the salt, though. There's more than enough flavor in the turkey for you to enjoy a satisfying meal.

Have a fun and satisfying, but not stuffed, holiday season.

For more information, visit eatwelllivewellwithsci.com.

Kylie James, CNP, and Joanne Smith, CNP, are co-authors of the Paralyzed Veterans of America-supported book Eat Well, Live Well with Spinal Cord Injury. ■