

Strategies for Healthy Eating at Social Events

Sometimes a 'dining out' situation isn't at a fast food counter or restaurant. It could be a social gathering, business lunch, holiday meal or any other place where you are not in control of what's served.

But the important thing to remember is that you can still choose to be in control of what you eat for your diabetes management. No matter where you are.

At a buffet or cocktail party choose items that are low in fat like crunchy vegetables. But go lightly on the dip or choose a low-fat dip option like salsa.

"If it's a buffet where you suspect you'll probably make two trips, if you can, to fill up on the first plate with the protein and the non-starchy veggies and then kind of give yourself the option to go back if you want it."

Watch your portion sizes here too. You can choose to use a dessert plate instead of a dinner plate to help control the amount you eat. Stand in a spot that is away from the food tables to avoid constant nibbling or return visits.

When you're faced with a casserole at a potluck or holiday party and you don't know what all the ingredients are ask the host to find out how it was prepared. Make an informed choice whenever you can.

Here are some tips you can try the next time you're in these situations.

Eat something small and healthy before going to the party.

Plan ahead. Think about what you are going to eat before you get to the party. Thinking about healthy choices before-hand will make it easier to actually pick those choices later.

Drink some water before you go through the buffet line. This will help you feel full without adding extra calories.

"Keep kind of that hunger/fullness scale in the back of your mind and to notice if you're-- to try and take the edge off hunger before going. Sometimes it's to bring something you know you would enjoy eating."

Remember – a social occasion is just that – social. If you eat out of boredom, loneliness, or because everyone else is, you may eat more than you planned to. Ask yourself if you're really hungry. Then spend more time chatting with your friends, family or colleagues instead of snacking. Who knows, you may just eat less and have more fun at the same time.

Sometimes you may find it difficult to make healthy food choices, especially when it's the holidays or a special occasion like your birthday. Don't worry.

A holiday party or social gathering only lasts a few hours. If you do eat more than you normally would, or foods you wouldn't normally choose, be OK with your choice.

Try dancing at the party or walking home after the event. Put the party behind you and get right back to making healthy food choices the next meal or day.

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At your next social gathering try to make healthy food choices. You can choose foods low in fat, carbohydrate and calories; watch your portion sizes, especially with starchy foods; choose the veggie tray; ask what's in the prepared foods; plan ahead; don't skip meals in order to 'save calories'. This will likely only make you more hungry, and therefore make it difficult for you to make sensible meal choices; eat only because you are hungry and not because you're bored.

When is your next holiday party or special occasion? Are there choices you can make ahead of time so that your party is a healthy experience?

By using some of these strategies at your next social gathering, you can keep it diabetes friendly and fun at the same time.