Tips for Healthy Holiday Parties

If you are hosting a gathering this holiday season **you can reduce fat and calories without sacrificing taste** by swapping out a few ingredients in your favorite recipes.

* Using two egg whites in place of one egg can reduce the cholesterol and produce the same tasty result.
* Use low-sodium, fat-free chicken broth in your mashed potatoes to add flavor and cut back on added butter or margarine.
* Substitute applesauce for oil, margarine or butter in muffins and quick breads like banana bread. Try substituting a small amount at first, as the more you substitute the more the texture of the finished product changes.
* For dips, sauces and pie toppings, use fat-free yogurt, sour cream and whipped topping.
* Sliced almonds make a delicious, crunchy topping in place of fried onion rings.
* Choose reduced-fat or low-fat cheeses for salads and casseroles.

**Pack your shopping cart with plenty of fresh vegetables** like sweet potatoes, winter squash, broccoli, carrots and green beans. Apples, cranberries and pears combine easily for a tasty salad, fruit crisp or topping for the turkey.

**If you are a guest at a dinner party or other gathering,** consider these tips to keep your night healthy, happy and safe:

* If you plan on treating yourself later, start your day with a small meal that includes whole grains, fruit, low-fat or fat-free dairy and protein, such as eggs, ham or peanut butter.
* Don't starve yourself beforehand. Rather, eat a small, lower-calorie meal or snack including fruit or a bagel so you aren't tempted to overdo your calorie intake for the day.
* Choose carefully between foods you definitely will eat, those you will sample and those you will skip.
* Don't rush to eat. Socialize and settle into the festivities before you eat.
* Move your socializing away from the buffet or appetizer trays. This will minimize the unconscious nibbling.

When it comes to drinking alcohol, start with a calorie-free, nonalcoholic beverage. Satisfy your thirst before having an alcoholic drink. Moderate alcohol consumption is defined as up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks for men.

Keep in mind, even **a single drink will affect your reflexes** for several hours. If you plan to drink, keep your holidays merry for everyone by designating a driver who won't be drinking.

The holidays are a great time for celebrating with friends and family over food and drinks. With just a little preparation, you can keep off the extra holiday pounds and still enjoy all that the season has to offer.