

Holiday Guide for Diabetes

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The holidays will keep us running until the New Year. In addition to managing family and work responsibilities, we're thrust into a whirlwind of gift-buying, decorating, cooking, entertaining and traveling. How in the world can you maintain good diabetes control with all this going on? Use this guide as a "survivor's manual" to help you through the holidays. With a little planning and some thought, you can have the healthy, happy holidays you deserve.

10 Survival Tips for the Holidays

1. **Set realistic blood glucose goals and exercise goals** for the holidays and plan accordingly. Make conscious decisions about your self-care, weighing costs and benefits of how strict you should be in managing diabetes.
2. **Plan and prioritize your work and time.** There are only 24 hours in every day. Before the holidays kick into high gear, think about how you want to spend those hours. Learn to say "no" to less important events, and think twice before agreeing to holiday-related projects and parties.
3. **Make a list of what you need to get done and when.** Look over your list daily, checking off what you've accomplished. Keep post-its on hand in case you think of something you need to do and add it to your main list. Organize your time efficiently, such as cooking ahead and freezing foods, giving gift certificates or shopping on line, and shopping on a weekday or early morning to avoid the crowds.
4. **Delegate.** Let the kids decorate cookies and address greeting cards. Invite a friend over to help decorate. Give your spouse a list of presents to pick up. Do not be afraid to ask for help.
5. **Exercise regularly.** People tend to stop exercising during the holidays because they feel there is no extra time. Remember that exercise can have a powerful impact on your mood – it reduces stress and gives you an emotional lift when you need it. Moderate workouts also help you maintain good blood sugar control, so schedule time for a brief workout several times a week. Incorporate physical activity into your day (walk around the mall once or twice and window shop before purchasing; suggest a family walk before opening gifts; walk on your lunch hour, or schedule exercise breaks between holiday projects at home.)
6. **Check your plate.** It's no secret that many people gain weight over the holidays. For nearly 6 weeks, we're tempted with an array of gooey sweets and other calorie-laden goodies at parties, work, and family gatherings. All that rich food can wreak havoc on your blood sugar and healthy meal plan. Follow your usual eating schedule as closely as possible, but allow yourself some room for your favorite treats so you don't feel too deprived.
7. **At parties, offer to contribute food that fits with your meal plan,** such as a vegetable platter with low-fat herb dip, or diet soft drinks. Don't hover next to the dessert table. Keep alcohol to a minimum – alcoholic beverages are loaded with "empty calories" and tend to weaken your resolve to eat sensibly.
8. **Fine tune your recipes.** Instead of sugar, use sugar substitutes (such as Splenda®, aspartame), or cut the amount in your recipes by ½. Use lower fat ingredients such as egg substitute, light sour cream, light cream cheese, non-fat milk, and diet margarine. Buy a healthy holiday cookbook and try out some new recipes.
9. **Learn to relax.** If necessary, block out time in your appointment book to relax and renew your spirit. Read a book, take a bath, watch a movie, or close your eyes and listen to music.
10. **Get a good night's sleep.** Sleep replenishes your energy so you can make it through the holidays. Life can become a nightmare - for you and those around you – when you don't get enough shut-eye.

Rejoice in the holiday spirit by spending quality time with your loved ones, rather than running yourself ragged in an attempt to be perfect. If things don't go well today, concentrate on making them better tomorrow.