

# Enjoying Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving can be a time of great anxiety for people with diabetes because it is so focused on food.

Don't let questions about what to eat, how much to eat, and meal timing dampen your holiday. Plan in advance, so you can fully enjoy the day and keep your diabetes management on track.

## General Tips

**Think about the timing of your meal.** Many families eat large meals at odd times on holidays. For example, Thanksgiving dinner may be served in the middle of the afternoon. Plan in advance for how you will handle making changes if your meal does not line up with your regular meal schedule.

If you take insulin injections or a pill that lowers blood glucose, you may need to have a snack at your normal meal time to prevent a low blood glucose reaction. Check with your health care team about this.

**Be physically active!** The best way to compensate for eating a little more than usual is to be active. Start a new tradition that involves moving around away from the food. Ideas include taking a walk with the whole family or playing Frisbee, soccer, or touch football with your children, grandchildren, or the neighborhood kids.

**Have foods to nibble on while you are cooking or waiting to eat.** Make sure the foods you choose won't sabotage blood glucose levels before the meal. Bring a platter of raw or blanched veggies with your favorite low-calorie dip or have a few small pieces of low-fat cheese. Don't indulge on high-calorie or fried appetizers.

**Make selective food choices.** Many traditional Thanksgiving foods are high in carbohydrates: mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, stuffing, dinner rolls, cranberry sauce, pumpkin pie, and other desserts. Don't feel like you have to sample everything on the table.

Have a reasonable portion of your favorites and pass on the rest. For example, if stuffing is your favorite, pass on rolls. Choose either sweet potatoes or mashed potatoes. If you really want to try everything, make your portions smaller.

**Eat smaller portions.** Because high carbohydrate foods are plentiful at most Thanksgiving feasts, watch your portion sizes. If you can't decide on one or two carbohydrate foods to eat, take very small portions or "samples" of several dishes.

Overall, try to keep your total carbohydrate intake like a regular day.

Source: <http://www.diabetes.org/food-and-fitness/food/planning-meals/holiday-meal-planning/enjoying-thanksgiving.html?print=t>

**Eat your vegetables.** Vegetables are important for everyone! Unfortunately, the vegetable selection on holiday menus is usually limited. We all want to dress up the table with tempting treats. Why not add some colorful vegetable dishes?

Veggies come in all colors and are very nutritious. Offer to bring a green salad or a side of steamed veggies that have been seasoned. Non-starchy veggies are low in carbs and calories. They will help fill you up and keep you from overeating other high-calorie and high-fat foods on the table.

## **Turkey Preparation Tips**

- **Turkey is a great addition to your diet.** White turkey meat (without skin) is low in fat and high in protein. It is a good source of iron, zinc, phosphorus, potassium and B vitamins. It is also one of the only parts of the Thanksgiving meal with no carbohydrate. A serving is about 3 ounces or the size of a deck of cards.
- **Thawing a frozen turkey.** There are a few ways to do this: in the refrigerator, in the microwave or in cold water. See the link below for directions on how to use these thawing methods safely. Never thaw turkey at room temperature.
- **Roasting is a good method for cooking.** Avoid frying your turkey or adding extra fat during cooking.
- **For safety reasons, stuffing your turkey is not recommended.** You can still make your own stuffing in a casserole dish though. If you decide to stuff it anyways, fill the turkey loosely just before you place it in the oven. Do not over-stuff. The stuffing must be cooked to a minimum temperature of 165° F to be safe.
- **Use a shallow pan to roast your turkey to perfection.** Heat your oven to no less than 325° F. Insert a meat thermometer into the innermost part of the thigh and wing of the bird. You will also want to check the temperature of the thickest part of the breast. The thermometer should read at least 165° F in all of these places for it to be done and safe to eat.

For more detailed turkey preparation tips and for thawing and roasting times, see the [USDA's Consumer Guide to Safely Roasting a Turkey.](#)