

Thanksgiving

the food, food everywhere holiday

It takes as much energy to wish as it does to plan. — Eleanor Roosevelt

According to Dr. Cedric Bryant, chief exercise physiologist for the American Council on Exercise a 160-pound person would have to run at a moderate pace for four hours, swim for five hours or walk 30 miles to burn off a 3,000-calorie Thanksgiving Day meal. That's a lot of work for one meal! Here are some tips that have worked for me.

- Don't have the celebration at your house if possible; it makes it harder to leave the extra food.
- Find a local homeless shelter or soup kitchen and make arrangements to bring your extra food to those who could really use it right now. Knowing you will do this after the dinner is over will banish feelings of guilt over what to do with "all this food." Having a plan ensures your success, and others benefit, too.
- Go to someone else's home and offer to bring a few side dishes. The side dishes are what make the calories and points go up fast. They're usually cream based, cheese based or made with tons of butter or sugar. By bringing your side dishes, you will have a few things to eat with the turkey or ham (which are actually some of the better food choices for this holiday).
- Don't bring leftovers home. It's OK to say no! If you do have leftovers, make it the turkey; it's the healthiest item and will be something you can eat and still hit your goals.
- If you have Thanksgiving at your home, insist everyone take their leftover food home with them. If they don't, feel free to throw it out after they leave.
- Find a restaurant that serves Thanksgiving dinner and go out to eat. Think of it: no cooking or cleanup!
- Don't drink your calories. Skipping the sugary drinks helps with the extra food calories you consume.
- If preparing the holiday meal stresses you out, have it catered. Let someone else handle all the work so you can visit with your guests and enjoy the day stress free.



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- ❑ Walk the food table first to see what's offered. Find the two or three things you would be heartbroken not to have had (for me, it's usually on the dessert table). If Great-Aunt Alice makes an awesome sweet potato casserole, and she only makes it for Thanksgiving, and it's the one thing you look forward to every year—eat it! You will be more miserable and more apt to leave your weight loss plan if you're always passing on the foods you love.
- ❑ Some foods—like dinner rolls, mashed potatoes or stuffing—are things you can get anytime or anywhere (unless it's Great-Aunt Alice's special recipe that she only makes for Thanksgiving!). These might be the foods you pass up to make room for those two or three items you must have.
- ❑ Focus on going up to the food table twice—yes, twice. The first time, just get vegetables and fruit. The salad you brought would be a good place to start, along with any other healthy veggies or fruits that are available. The second time, get the turkey and the two or three foods you really want. Since you've already been up once, the second time you'll be more content and cautious about what you put on your plate. Plus, you'll feel better knowing you got your healthy foods in first.
- ❑ Instead of worrying about losing weight, just focus on maintaining your weight for the week and be thankful for all you have accomplished. Remember, the way you eat now will be how you'll eat for the rest of your life. You won't always be trying to lose weight, so practice maintenance now, not later.
- ❑ Don't skip a meal before the Thanksgiving feast. It's better to eat a bowl of soup or something protein based before you go. This will help you make good choices and not go crazy with your portions.
- ❑ Don't nap after dinner. Instead, go for a family walk. This will help even if the walk is slow and leisurely.
- ❑ Focus on spending time with those you love. If we can fall into bad patterns with our food and exercise routines, we can find ourselves in bad patterns with holiday traditions, too. Does it really matter where we eat or what we eat as long as we're with our loved ones and friends, giving thanks?

