

## IN THE KNOW ABOUT NUTRITION

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### “How to Combat Those Holiday Cravings!”

With the cool weather, warm ovens, and holiday cheer bubbling up around you, it can become quite difficult to stick to a healthy conscious diet. Sometimes just the lingering aroma of a fresh baked pie in the air or the bustling merriment associated with a friendly potluck is enough to send a person right over the edge into a holiday feeding frenzy! While this indulgence of flavorful food may be a pleasurable experience at the time, one must keep in mind that the scale will still be rearing to battle once you find yourself locked in the bathroom after all that snacking and savoring. No fear, though, for this year there are some helpful strategies that you can take with you to that dinner table and those kitchen counters — all you need is a little motivation and some good old fashioned willingness to do a few simple things to help prevent the undoing of your diet and loosening of your belt strap.

#### *Practical pointers to staying on the right holiday eating path:*

#### 1. Start your day with a healthy breakfast.

That's right, eating early can help save you later! A hot bowl of cereal and a boiled egg can give you a start to a day full of healthy eating by helping to regulate your blood sugar and hormones throughout the morning and prevent those looming cravings later on at noon! In the morning, your stores of energy in the form of a substance called “glycogen” are lowest from fasting, and going without eating even longer will deplete those stores further. Once your stores reach a certain “low point,” your body will kick in with hunger hormones that can send your cravings off the chart! So reach for some whole grains, some lean protein, and a small fresh piece of fruit before you step into the rest of your day. Consider it planned prevention!

#### 2. Eat on Schedule

Don't starve yourself throughout the day to “save room” for indulging later! Skipping meals or leaving too much time in between meals can set you up for a binge later on. Eat on time (when you are only somewhat hungry) so that you will not overeat from being “starved”. It is easier to use healthy portion control when you are not ravenous.

#### 3. Monitor Your Feelings

Sometimes strong emotions can be disguised as cravings for certain types of foods. When you feel anxious, do you start to crave comfort foods? You could just be looking for a way to escape anxiety. When you feel tired, do you crave cakes and sugary foods? You may just need an energy boost, and you can get this from healthy foods and well-balanced meals. Practice self-awareness so that you can identify what you're feeling and aren't running to the sweets table just to comfort yourself.

#### 4. Snack Wisely During the Day

Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains and healthy protein throughout the day will help you ward off extreme cravings and make you feel more satisfied when you do dig into a treat or two. Eat healthy snacks throughout the day to keep blood sugar levels stable so you're not stuck on the rollercoaster of sugar highs and lows.

#### 5. Allow Yourself at Least One Treat a Day

A ginger cookie, a few bites of a delicious brownie or a holiday cupcake can be a welcome treat through the holiday season, so don't deprive yourself! Exercise portion control and savor each bite (slowly) so you can enjoy the treat without obsessing about large

portioned calories and fat. This will eliminate cravings and allow you to be satisfied. Eat these earlier in the day (not late at night) so that you can burn off the extra sugar easily.

## 6. Get Hydrated

Drink up! Having water throughout the day and before meals can help fill your stomach and settling your needs. You may find that drinking water satisfies your craving in and of itself. Sometimes we can mistake dehydration for food cravings or real hunger. Your body is telling you that you need something, and you assume it is food when really it may be some simple water!

## 7. Wait and See

As strange as it may sound, sometimes you may be able to simply “wait out” a craving. Our bodies have two types of eating signals: appetite and hunger. Real hunger is when your body really does need food. Appetite is when your mind *thinks* you need food when really you do not. Preoccupy your mind by doing something else for about 20 minutes. If you still want something after waiting, chances are you may really be hungry, so go ahead and eat something (in MODERATION), but you may find that the craving has pleasantly passed.

## 8. Stay Busy

Keep yourself going doing other things that do not involve eating. Staying active helps your body to regulate itself and keeps your mind where it needs to be while your stomach is fed — off of food. Take time to eat when you are hungry, but make sure that you are focused on more than food.

Source: Adapted from “How to Deal with Cravings Over the Holidays” from [www.DivaVillage.com](http://www.DivaVillage.com)

## Pumpkin Spiced Oatmeal Pecan Cookies

1 cup all purpose flour  
2 cups quick oats  
1 teaspoon baking powder  
½ teaspoon baking soda  
½ teaspoon salt  
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon  
2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice  
2 Tablespoons unsalted butter, room temperature  
½ cup sugar  
½ cup unpacked brown sugar  
1 large egg  
6 Tablespoons canned pumpkin (not pumpkin pie filling)  
2 teaspoons vanilla extract  
¾ cup chopped pecans

Preheat oven to 350° F.; line two baking sheets with parchment paper or use a silpat.

In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, oats, baking powder, baking soda, salt, pumpkin spice and cinnamon. In a large bowl, with a mixer, cream together the butter and the sugars on medium speed.

Add the egg, followed by the pumpkin and vanilla extract.

Working by hand, stir in the flour mixture and the oats until just combined and no streaks of flour remain; stir in the pecans.

Drop 1 tablespoon of the dough at a time onto prepared baking sheets. Bake for about 10-12 minutes, or until cookies become light brown at the edges.

Cool on baking sheet for 3 or 4 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.

Makes 32 cookies, 1 tablespoon each. •Servings: 16 • Serving Size: 2 cookies • Calories: 165.2 • Fat: 6.3 g • Protein: 3.3 g • Carb: 26.3 g • Fiber: 1.6 g • Sugar: 13 g • Sodium: 149.4 mg

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Source: [www.Skinnytaste.com](http://www.Skinnytaste.com)

Source: Kristin Thonsgaard, TTU Dietetic Intern 2011-12

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