

Tis' the Season for Diet Holiday Hazards

A game plan is essential to avoiding Thanksgiving table traps and Christmas party pitfalls

As the song goes 'it's the most wonderful time of the year'. That is unless you're on a diet or seriously watching your weight. In addition to the family, friendship, fun and frivolity - food - and plenty of it, can make the next few weeks the most anxious time of the year for many.

So, what is a diet-conscious person to do when tempted with enough food and drink to melt your calorie counter?

"A lot of people will wait until the last minute to decide what they're going to do as far as eating, meal prep, those types of things," says Nathan Hamman, Wellness Manager at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center, in Rockford. "So, I tell people, even when it's not holiday time, think a week at a time. You know, think, 'what am I going to have' - not exactly every meal, every day, but, for the most part, we go shopping almost once a week - especially if you're going to want to have fresh produce in your house - it only lasts about that long. So think through the meals you're going to do and the timing of things. So, if you're going to have Thanksgiving at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, you're going to be hungry before that - eat something low-calorie, healthy in the morning to get you going right."

Hamman offers these simple tips to guide you through the battalions of buffets. Eat or drink a glass of water before you go. When at the party, avoid the fancy, sugar-laden coffee drinks, soda and cocktails. If you're asked to bring a dish, make it something healthy - like a fruit or veggie tray.

"So you know that when the tempting foods are there, you have something else to turn to that, either you brought, or that you're just not hungry when you go to the party," says Hamman.

It's also suggested you not face the flood of food solo. Hamman says find a buddy to battle the bounty.

"Accountability is always good, whether it's a formal program or it's just somebody you know that can keep you accountable." says Hamman. On-line tracking works for some people. So, downloading one of the nutrition and fitness apps that you can just put your data in yourself and it tell you 'hey, you ate too much today'. So, that's enough accountability for some people. Some people need somebody to say 'hey, put it down'."

Setbacks are inevitable. The will to win can carry you only so far. Hamman says if you lose a couple battles of the bulge - don't get discouraged. Take a long walk or go to the gym and do better next time. Remember, dieting is a marathon, not a sprint.