

## Celebrate Holiday Eating

Are you already feeling guilty about the holiday eating you haven't even done? "I always eat so much over the holidays. I'm sooo bad!" How many of us have thought that way at one time or another?

With all of the social pressure to be stick thin, it's easy to fall into the trap of judging yourself based on the food you are eating. If you believe your weight or your enjoyment of holiday foods makes you a lesser person, you could be eroding your self-esteem and your body-image which can hinder your enjoyment of life and lead to disordered eating down the road. Taking pleasure in eating is a natural part of life and something that is worthy of celebration.

Why do we associate food with our sense of worth? There are many reasons, but a common theme is a fear of weight-gain and desire to be thin. We often feel bad when we eat foods that we think do not contribute to health. But health is not just the prevention of diet-related diseases. The World Health Organization defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease.

If we allow food or our weight to make us feel bad because we want a slim body, then how much emotional energy is available to help us live meaningful lives? While there are certainly some foods that nourish our bodies better than others there are also foods that nurture our souls. We should be able to enjoy a variety of foods in balance and moderation and have this enhance our lives without damaging our sense of worth. Exploring and enjoying the food culture of our holiday seasons adds richness to our holiday experience. It gives us a sense of tradition and strengthens our connections with our families and our friends.

This holiday season; make a commitment to not criticize yourself for every gingerbread cookie you enjoy. Serve up fruits and vegetables in addition to sweet treats whenever you can and get outside for a daily dose of activity and fresh winter air. Most of all enjoy sharing time and tradition with those you love.

Author: Tara Stark is a Community Nutritionist working with Interior Health  
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