

## ***How to Enjoy and Survive Thanksgiving***

By Ryan Harrison

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I'd wager that most of us have done it before: gorged ourselves on too much Thanksgiving food. Despite our best intentions, and even though we "know better," we are probably just like millions of other Americans who, come that great day of feasting, simply can't stop ourselves from one more slice of pie, a second helping of stuffing, a final glass of wine.

Well, here's the good news: If you are in top shape and excellent health, if you exercise regularly, eat a well-balanced diet comprised mostly of fresh fruits and vegetables, and if you drink pure, filtered water in place of soft drinks each day...well, then an over-the-top feast on Thanksgiving is probably not going to affect your overall health very much. Splurge and have a great time!

If, however, you're like the vast majority of people who eat out more often than they eat at home, drink coffee and soda more regularly than they do water, eat more bread and meat than veggies, have dessert more often than not, and really *want* (or need) to lose weight to be in better health...then the rest of this article is for *you*.

Knowing how to approach a calorie-rich, carb-heavy, and sugar-laden Thanksgiving feast is the first order of the day. I advocate making a list of your holiday dining priorities. Where does pumpkin pie fall? Turkey? Stuffing? Cranberry relish? Wine? Knowing your "pecking order" – essentially, which foods are most important to you – is a great way to be sure that you don't over indulge on the foods that you really don't need or care very much about. For example, if you know that you can be happy with less mashed potatoes and stuffing as long as you can count on two slices of pumpkin pie, then set that intention and take half as much of the former when it gets passed your way.

If you simply can't pass anything up and want to have your way at the table, then at the very least take this piece of advice: drink one to two tall glasses of water and munch on as many vegetable appetizers (carrots, celery, olives, etc.) as you can *before* the main meal. This will help fill your stomach with low-calorie, health-promoting foods, while also setting in motion a biochemical messaging system that will help you feel full faster. You may end up with a plate of half-eaten foods, but at least you'll have had a taste of everything you wanted!

And don't underestimate the calorie-leveling effects of moderate exercise. Even if you rarely get out and get moving, make it a goal on Thanksgiving Day to get out of bed and go for a brisk walk first thing in the morning. If you walk for a good 30-45 minutes, you can burn as many as 150 to 245 calories, depending on your weight and walking speed. That may not seem like a lot, especially in relation to the rich foods of the day, but if you take another walk after the meal, and another one before bed, it really adds up!

Most people know that consuming a whopping 5,000 calories in one Thanksgiving sitting is not a healthful activity. You can keep your calories lower by making smart choices: aim for veggies early on, savor your desserts (taste them, don't just "wolf" them down), and try taking half as much as you are inclined to when the dishes start getting passed around the table. Keep in mind that one of the chief joys of Thanksgiving is the opportunity to spend it with friends and family and to remember the various ways that your life is blessed. Your body is one of those blessings, and I encourage you to give thanks this year by being good to it.