



The golden rule for a healthy holiday

December 19, 2012

Dawson Creek Daily News

The holiday season can be a crazy and hectic time. Its also a time when eating healthy and exercising can sometime fall to the wayside.

However, there are things people can do to make sure that while they still enjoy the holiday season and all the treats that go with it, they can continue to make healthy choices.

-One of the main things is maintaining a basic healthy eating pattern and making sure that youre still eating three meals a day at your regular meal time and not skipping meals just because theres a big meal coming up," said Cara Witt, a dietitian at the Dawson Creek Health Unit.

While Witt admits that maintaining a healthy diet and active lifestyle over the course of the holidays can be challenging, she did have some ideas on how people can avoid overindulgence.

-If you know youre going somewhere with a large buffet, and youre getting really hungry, (have) a small snack before you go the function. If youre less hungry you wont be as likely to overeat," she said.

In addition, if a person knows they are going to be out of the house for a long time, Witt recommends planning ahead.

-Take a healthy snack with you ... yogurt, fruit, veggies, mixed nuts, something like that."

Melanie Chapple, a registered dietitian at the Fort St. John Hospital, agreed that planning what is important.

-Take a walk around the appetizer table and just pick your top three items that you really want to eat," she advised.

Buffets can be tough because of the amount of food thats available in one place.

-Theres research that the more food available the more food youre going to consume because of variety • use a small appetizer plate and socialize away from the table so youre not tempted to pick more," Chapple said.

While it may seem like going back for seconds is bad, she explained that under the right circumstances going back for seconds is fine.

-Its ok to go back for seconds as long as I recommended people ask themselves, Am I still hungry? " Chapple said.

Both Chapple and Witt explained that when deciding upon which foods to eat, picking fruits and veggies first is always a great option.

-Focus on vegetables first, whether its appetizers or the meal," said Chapple."

Witt suggested choosing fruit and veggies with low calorie yogurt dip or hummus is a good choice.

For those people who love the main meal, there are ways to still enjoy all the traditional foods without going overboard on the calories.

-At the meal, you want to look for plain rice, potatoes, eating the chicken breast or the turkey breast, the white meat is leaner than the dark meat and remove the skin before you eat the turkey • the skin is saturated fat," said Chapple.

Even adding some fruits or veggies to certain dishes can make a difference.

-Increase the veggies in your stuffing, (means) you can reduce the bread content and you add more moisture when you add onions, celery and apples to your stuffing," said Chapple.

In addition, to making smart choices at the tables, its also important to try and get some activity in.

Witt suggests making it something everyone can participate in.

-With your family, try and organize things around activity. Go tobogganing or skating or skiing or something like that ... not having everything focused around food and meals."

Exercise is necessary over the holidays not just because of its effects on the body, but it is also essential for your mental well-being.

-Take 30 minutes to yourself, take a walk, get some exercise in. If its -20, put on your Christmas music and dance around the house for 15 minutes. Keeping that exercise in will help keep those extra calories that youre eating at bay," said Chapple.

However, with these tips and suggestions also comes the realization that its ok to indulge.

-Its totally fine to have a treat. Its really looking at your portions and are you going to stop at the one slice of cheesecake or pie," said Chapple.

Witt has a rule that she suggests people try in order to balance healthy eating and other foods.

Try to make healthy choices 80 per cent of the time and treat yourself 20 per cent of the time, to keep things balanced and avoid guilt about traditional holiday indulgences.

-Theres an 80/20 rule," explained Witt. -It is the holiday season and you do want to enjoy yourself but keeping in mind 80 per cent of the time try to keep healthy."

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