



How to Beat the Binge-Fest

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With the holidays (and presents!) around the corner, your children are probably filled with excitement. It's a wonderful time to celebrate with family, but that doesn't have to mean tossing out your gang's healthy lifestyle habits. Here's how to make it a happy AND healthy season.

Problem: Treats replace meals

Solution: Whether it's chocolate coins, eggnog or grandma's famous shortbread, it's okay for kids to indulge in a few treats. In fact studies show that children who eat some candy may be less likely to be overweight or obese than those who never indulge. But try to keep treats for *after* meals; when little tummies are full of candy and chips, there's no room left for the vegetables, fruit, whole grains and lean protein choices they need.

Problem: They graze like crazy

Solution: Without the structure of a school day, kids may sleep in, skip meals, eat more snacks and be in the fridge all day. Encourage them to stick to their regular schedule of three daily meals and between-meal snacks. The kitchen can be off-limits at other times. And remember, if you're all outside tobogganing or skating, no one's raiding the fridge!

Problem: Junk food rules

Solution: Ask friends and relatives to hold the edible gifts; with all the candy canes and cheesies around, your child does not need his own personal stash. When you do get food as a present, keep it out of sight. Instead, load the fridge with sliced vegetables and fruit so kids have a ready-to-eat snack in an instant. Or, make delicious options that happen to also be nutritious. Try our Sweet potato chips and dip (see attached).

Problem: No means... whining!

Solution: Set guidelines up front so no one is surprised. Perhaps use the one-treat-a day rule (or whatever works for your family). Deprivation leads to cravings. Instead, get everyone to agree on reasonable limits. It also helps to keep the holiday focus on fun – not food. Start new, active traditions -- a neighbourhood snowman contest or tobogganing with cousins.

Problem: You feel like the Grinch

Solution: Between shopping and cooking, you've got enough to do without policing every bite your kids eat. (And while high fat and sugary foods are bad for heart health, so is stress!) So relax a little and remind yourself that the holidays are short; you can balance a bad nutrition day with something better tomorrow. And remember that the overall eating pattern matters more than just a few days of decadence.

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Sweet Potato Chips and Dip

Serves 4 | Prep Time: 15mins | Cook Time: 20mins | Total Time: 35mins

Enjoy this easy snack that is full of vitamins and as well as addictive. The chips are easy as they are delicious, served on their own or with the dip.

Ingredients

sweet potatoes, about 1 kg/ 2lbs, peeled

15 mL (1 tbsp) canola oil

10 mL (2 tsp) mild chili or curry powder

2 mL (1/2 tsp) cumin seeds (optional)

1 mL (1/4 tsp) freshly ground black pepper

Yogurt dip:

60 mL (1/4 cup) 0% plain Greek yogurt

30 mL (2 tbsp) mango chutney

Pinch ground coriander

15 mL (1 tbsp) chopped fresh mint or Italian parsley



Directions

1. Thinly slice sweet potatoes crosswise into 3 mm (1/8 inch) thick slices and place in large bowl.
2. Add oil, chili, cumin and pepper; use your hands to toss them gently to coat evenly.
3. Spread potato slices in a single layer over 2 large parchment paper lined baking sheets.
4. Bake in bottom and top thirds of 250 C (450 F) oven, turning once and switching pans for about 20 minutes or until sweet potatoes are golden brown.
5. Keep an eye on the chips as they can become golden quickly in the last few minutes of cooking.
6. Let cool slightly.
7. Yogurt dip: In small bowl, stir together yogurt, chutney, coriander and mint. Serve with chips.

Tip: For thin, even sweet potato slices, use a mandolin or the vegetable slicer on a food processor.

Option: Use 1 kg/ 2 lbs parsnips, peeled and thinly sliced, in place of the sweet potatoes.

Nutritional Info Per Serving: 263 calories; 5g protein; 4g total fat; 0g saturated fat; 7g fibre; 173mg sodium

Recipe developed by Emily Richards, PH Ec.

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