

12 Thanksgiving Weight Loss Tips That Actually Work

[Health](#) by [Barbara Brody](#) on 11/25/2014



12 Thanksgiving Diet Hacks

Photo: [Pond5](#)

Gravy-drenched drumsticks, buttery mashed potatoes, and gooey pecan pie all sound scrumptious — until you think about what they'll do to your waistline. While you shouldn't deprive yourself of all your favorite [Thanksgiving staples](#), cutting back just a little and making some smart swaps can go a long way in maintaining the physique you've worked hard to build. Try these 12 expert-backed tips to make it through turkey day without feeling like a stuffed, well, you know.

1. Eat *before* the big meal.

Yes, you read that correctly! Showing up for the feast with a rumbling tummy is a recipe for over-eating, so be sure to pre-game by having a nutritious, low-cal snack. A bowl of [vegetable soup](#) about one hour before mealtime should help tame your hunger, says Sonya Angelone, R.D., a spokesperson for the [Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics](#). Picking at an [appetizer veggie platter](#) is a good option as well.

2. Dress to impress.

Save your baggy, comfy clothes for another occasion. Instead, break out a form-fitting garment — think skinny jeans or a curve-hugging dress. “You’ll be less likely to overeat if you’re wearing something a little snug, because you’ll start feeling uncomfortable more quickly,” says [Keri Gans](#), R.D., author of [The Small Change Diet](#). If you can make it through the meal without having to undo the top button of your pants, you’re in good shape.

3. Make single-size versions of decadent dishes.

Want to be the perfect host? Add flair to the table and stop everyone, including yourself, from overdoing it by offering individual portions of the fattiest items on the menu, suggests Jackie Newgent, R.D., culinary nutritionist and author of [The With or Without Meat Cookbook](#). “For instance, bake stuffing in cups of a muffin pan; make [sweet potato](#) or green bean casserole in individual ramekins; ladle creamy soups into espresso cups; or serve gravy or rich [salad](#) dressing in shot glasses.” Pre-sizing eliminates the opportunity to pile those taters too high.

4. Don't worry, be picky.

Before sitting down at the dinner table, have a few favorites foods in mind that you plan to [indulge](#) in — and don't be afraid to change course if the first taste proves to be more “meh” than marvelous. “If it isn't everything you'd hoped it would be, [don't waste calories](#) by having another bite,” says [Elisa Zied](#), R.D., author of [Younger Next Week](#). “Try something different.” Wouldn't you rather fill up on yummy fare rather than an average dish?

5. Make faux mashed potatoes.

Can't limit yourself to a small scoop of these buttery spuds? Then bypass them entirely in favor of [cauliflower](#). "For a delicious stand-in, boil cauliflower, mash it, and add a little skim milk, lemon and garlic," say Tammy Lakatos Shames, R.D., and Lyssie Lakatos, R.D., aka "[The Nutrition Twins](#)." The similar texture and color will trick you into thinking you're getting the real thing.

6. Choose booze or sugar.

Cocktails and dessert are usually both laden with [sugar](#) and calories, so pick a singular indulgence — but still be mindful of serving sizes. Think one small [piece of pie](#) or a half-cup of eggnog, says Zied, will do the trick.

7. Mix up a 45-calorie cocktail.

If liquor and dessert are equally essential to you enjoying the holiday, at least [choose your libation wisely](#). For a mere 45 calories you can have a "Fruity Tooty Spritzer," say Lakatos and Lakatos Shames: Simply combine 1 cup sparkling water, 2 ounces vodka, 1 tablespoon grapefruit juice and 6 raspberries. Garnish with fresh mint leaves. For more better-for-you beverages, check out these [10 Healthy Holiday Cocktail Recipes](#).

8. Eat off colorful plates.

Leave the fancy white china in the cabinet. "You'll likely eat more when light-colored foods, such as turkey and mashed potatoes, are served on white or cream plates," says Newgent. "[Research](#) has found that the more contrast between your food and plate color, the less you'll likely eat — or overeat." Bring on the bolds!

9. Go to the back of the line.

Heading to a holiday buffet? Let others get their fill first. "Once the cheese platter and [desserts](#) have been picked over they won't seem nearly as enticing," says [Karen Ansel, R.D.](#), a New York-based nutritionist. As hard as it may be, fight the urge to be number one.

10. Choose appetizers that provide visual clues.

If you tend to inhale your food without realizing how much you consumed, opt for nibbles like in-shell [pistachio nuts](#). “Their empty shells are a helpful visual cue about how much you’ve eaten, potentially encouraging you to [eat less](#),” says Ansel. Chicken satay and shrimp cocktail are also good options, as you can watch the skewers and tails stack up.

11. Draw a clear finish line.

Once you’ve had your fair share, reach for a “meal ender” to prevent you from picking at whatever’s in front of you. Zied suggests popping a breath strip, sucking on a strong mint, or reapplying your lip gloss. Another trick: Pour some water on your plate so you won’t want to use it anymore — just make sure no one’s watching.

12. Join the cleanup crew.

“One hour spent clearing the table and washing dishes while you’re standing can whittle off about 100 calories,” says Newgent. Plus your host will be grateful!

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