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Written by [Lindsay Downey](#)

Healthy holiday tips

- » Don't starve yourself the day of the party. Eat small meals throughout the day.
- » Eat a snack before you go out. A protein shake or berries and nuts are good options.
- » Take a small plate at the party and fill at least half of it with veggies.
- » Eat slowly and savor each bite.
- » Pay more attention to conversation and friends and less to the buffet table.
- » Don't sample every food at the party. Instead, enjoy small bites of your favorite treats.
- » Consider bringing a healthy food option to the party, if appropriate.
- » Drink club soda or water between cocktails and limit alcohol.
- » Don't skip the gym just because it's the holidays.

What: Restorative Health and Healing Center

Where: 10201 Arcos Ave., Suite 201, Estero

Info: 728-3627; drteresasievers.com

With her calendar full of holiday soirees in Stanford, Conn., recent Naples transplant Ellen Pradella always bypassed a large plate for a cocktail-sized one. She'd reach for a pastry or two, but only took a nibble of each.

"I'm very conscientious about what I eat," she said. "Seek out the crudite instead of the lasagna."

Pradella filled a good portion of her party plate with raw vegetables.

"Your plate should be a minimum of half vegetables — minimum," said Dr. Teresa Sievers, an internal medicine physician and owner of the Restorative Health and Healing Center in Estero.

Not loading up on meatballs, cookies and cheese comes down to pre-party planning.

Starving all day to “save up” calories isn’t a good idea. You’ll be ravenous by the time you hit your neighbor’s seasonal spread. And even if you don’t overeat, your body will release too much insulin after the all-day deprivation, Sievers said.

Instead, munch small meals throughout the day leading up to the shindig. Try a free-range egg and sautéed greens for breakfast and for lunch, a salad with gorgonzola beans, Sievers suggested.

And don’t skip your pre-party power walk or Pilates class.

Sure, it’s the holidays — a time to relax and indulge a little — but if you let your fitness routine slide, you’ll be working overtime in January.

“I can’t stress exercise enough,” said Sievers, who offers sugar-cleansing mini-detoxes at her center. “Don’t blow it off just because it’s the holidays.”

Bonus: The more muscle you build, the more calories your body will burn throughout the day.

Just before heading out for the party, drink a nutritious protein shake or nibble berries with a few nuts, full of protein, fiber and fat that will help stave off hunger and slow the rise of sugar in the blood.

“You won’t feel the need to nosh on all the little appetizers,” Sievers said.

Avoid mangoes, pineapples, bananas and melons, though. Those fruits are high on the glycemic index — meaning they’re quickly digested and will cause your body will release a large amount of insulin. For the following four to six hours, you’ll store fat and sugar will bottom out — until you’re hungry again.

If you head to the dessert table, try a few small bites of your favorite treat, or choose the lesser of two evils.

Although it’s high in fat, for example, pound cake is lower on the glycemic index than, say, pumpkin pie. If you do choose pie, skip the crust and say no to the whipped cream and ice cream.

Consider baking a healthier dessert to bring to the party. Sievers suggests a crisp with apples, nuts and cinnamon, sans all the sugar.

If you drink, distilled liquor such as gin or vodka is a better option than wine or beer, Sievers said. But limit your intake and sip slowly. Grab club soda or water with lemon between trips to the bar.

And if you’re watching your waistline, think twice before pouring a frothy, sugar-and-egg concoction. “No eggnog,” Sievers said. “It’s not allowed.”

http://www.news-press.com/article/20121214/COASTAL_LIFE/312140016/Healthy-holiday-noshing?nclick_check=1