# 9 Tips for Celebrating the Holidays with Diabetes

by REBECCA PACIOREK

## Diabetes and the Holidays

Yes, it's here. The most challenging time of the year to be a diabetic. Don't get me wrong, it is not easy the rest of the year, but the holidays are typically a time when diets are thrown out the window with thoughts of starting anew in January.

Managing diabetes and the holidays is all about preparation.

Most people are willing to overeat on all the cookies and eggnog their little hearts desire and eat all the sugarplums dancing in their heads. But, if you have diabetes, this is not something you can safely afford to do.

### Diabetes and Holidays: Eating Tips

The holiday season can be rough, but I am here to tell you that you can make it through and still manage to have some treats along the way with some preparation.

- **Bake for other people.** If you have always enjoyed baking and cooking during the holiday season, there is no reason to stop now. Just be sure to either make very small quantities or make enough to share. The key is not to have too many temptations sitting in your kitchen calling your name.
- **Make some of your own fancy coffees or hot chocolate.** There's nothing like a peppermint mocha coffee or tall mug of hot cocoa to make you get the warm and fuzzy feels of the holidays. Anything from local coffee shops is likely to have a lot of sugar. At the grocer, be sure to pick up some sugar-free whipped topping, sugar-free hot chocolate packets and some sugar-free flavored creamers. Then, when the urge hits, you will have all the ingredients at your fingertips for your special concoction. If you are out with friends for coffee, ask for a sugar-free syrup in yours and skip the whipped cream. That will save you on the carbs.
- **Bring something to the party that you know you can snack on.** This gives you the opportunity to provide something that you know will be diabetic friendly. The American Diabetes Association has many wonderful holiday recipes on their website. When in a pinch, snag a fruit or veggie tray, or a cheese/pepperoni sampler from the local grocery store.
- **Avoid the cookies.** You can say no, and being diabetic is the perfect excuse. Instead, treat yourself to a holiday movie, manicure, or new book. This leads to the next tip.
- **Eat the pie.** Yes, I said it. Now, let me explain, lest you eat an entire pie. It's been proven time and again that if you deny yourself small treats, you will be more likely to give up at some point and binge on all the bad stuff. It's the holidays. If you want to sample a few treats, there is no reason not to do so in moderation. A small slice of pie and a couple of cookies might be just enough to make you feel like you have had that special treat and not enough to throw your sugars out of whack.

### Don't Forget About Self-Care

- **Beef up your exercise routine.** Getting in some extra steps during the holiday season will help to make up for minor slips on your diet and will help you keep up the energy for all the socializing.
- **Pamper yourself in non-food ways.** The holiday season is tough enough for a person with diabetes, but stress-eaters tend to find the holidays even tougher. This is when you need to step up and make a stand to take care of yourself. Get a new hair-cut, buy a new outfit, just take some time to sit back and relax. Keeping yourself calm and relaxed will help keep you happy without having to overindulge.
- **Test more frequently.** I know, I know. Testing your blood sugars is last on your list of fun holiday events. But, by keeping an eye on your sugars, not only will you know if you are doing okay when you sneak in that extra cookie but you will be more cognizant of your treatment plan throughout the season. Staying on top of things now will prevent you from feeling blah later if your sugars bounce around too much.
- **Rest.** Seriously, the holidays can be tiring. Did you know that stress and not getting enough sleep can raise your blood sugars as much as physically consuming sugar? With rest, it becomes a round robin. Not enough sleep can cause diabetes. Having high sugars and needing to get up to urinate several times a night because of it can affect your sleep. If you are having any sleep issues, be sure to chat with your doctor about it before it affects your health.

**The Bottom Line**

If you plan and use moderation in small indulgences, you should be able to enjoy the holidays right along with your foodie friends without causing your sugars to spike.

Do you have any other tips for getting through the holidays? We’d love to hear them.