

Holiday Eating with Food Sensitivity



Holiday celebrations and traditions renew our spirits and reconnect us to important people in our lives. Food is an important part, so a restricted diet can make the holidays difficult.

Here are some tips to make holiday eating easier:

- If you will be eating in a restaurant, call a few hours before you arrive (ideally between meal rushes). Talk with the chef or manager that will be working during your visit. Most restaurants are happy to discuss their menu and suggest alternatives. Higher-end restaurants that cook from basic ingredients are usually more receptive. Restaurants with “pre-made” meals have less flexibility. If the restaurant cannot accommodate your needs, ask if they would reheat a meal that you bring. Many restaurants are willing to do this, so they don’t lose your entire group to another restaurant.
- A sit-down dinner at someone’s house (where everyone is eating the same thing around a table) can be very difficult. If you can, talk with the host a few days before to see what will be served. Offer to bring something to share.
- Pot lucks where people stand around and eat at different times are much easier! Bring a dish that you tolerate and is filling. If cross contamination is a concern, unwrap your dish, serve yourself and don’t go back.
- Arrange social events that don’t revolve around food (or at least not entirely). You could try a skating party, horse drawn sleigh ride, Christmas caroling, bowling, etc. This will be healthier, for everyone in your group!
- Pamper yourself with something other than food, such as:
 - sit by a warm fireplace,
 - watch a good movie,
 - read a book,
 - work on a puzzle,
 - give yourself permission to relax and not accomplish anything,
 - sit and listen to good music
- If possible, find “special treat” recipes that work with your restrictions. Keep some treats in the freezer, so you have them on hand if needed.
- If you know others in your area with similar restrictions, consider a “treat exchange”. For example, if there are six people, everyone makes six batches of a treat (e.g. six dozen cookies). At the exchange, everyone gets one batch of six different treats.
- If you are concerned about getting optimum nutrition, relax your standards during the holidays. Be careful not to relax necessary food restrictions, or you may not feel well.
- Acknowledge your feelings! When there are some things that you can no longer do, it’s normal to go through a grieving process. Try not to get swallowed up by the grief. Change the things you can to make it easier (see above) but acknowledge that somethings will be different.
- Food sensitivities are difficult for others to understand, especially if they are inconsistent... “Last year you could not eat potatoes, but this year

you can't eat tomatoes." This can create doubt and increase the tension at holiday gatherings. As much as possible, try to concisely explain your needs and not get locked into a battle of defending yourself.

- If you decide to skip a food-related social event, replace it with another event, so you don't become isolated.



Are you struggling with a restricted diet? I can [help you](#) with tips and tricks to make your life easier.