



Insurance Insights

December 2009

Holiday Travel: Using UT SELECT While You are Away from Home

As thoughts turn to planning for the upcoming holiday season, the furthest thing from our thoughts may be what to do if we need to access medical services while we are celebrating with friends and family. While we certainly hope for a safe and healthy holiday season for everyone, medical needs sometimes come up when we least expect them.

At home, you probably already know how your UT SELECT coverage works and where to find medical help if needed. While traveling, more questions may come up, especially if your travels take you outside of Texas or even abroad.

Please enjoy happy, safe, and healthy holidays, and keep the information below from the [UT SELECT Benefits Guide](#) in mind should you need medical help when you are away from home.

Tips for Domestic Travel:

- If you are outside of Texas and need health care, refer to your UT SELECT Medical ID Card and call BlueCard Access at (800) 810-BLUE (2583) for information on the nearest network doctors and hospitals.
- Although network providers outside of Texas may preauthorize those services that require preauthorization (such as a hospital admission), it is ultimately your responsibility to obtain preauthorization by calling the appropriate number on the back of your UT SELECT Medical ID Card.
- When you arrive at the doctor's office or hospital, present your UT SELECT Medical ID Card, and the doctor or hospital will verify eligibility and coverage information.
- After you receive medical attention, the network provider will file claims for you.
- You will be responsible for paying any applicable deductible, copayment or coinsurance amounts, as well as any charges for non-covered services. BlueCard providers have agreed to accept the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plan's allowable amount for covered services and will not bill you for any costs exceeding the allowable amount.

For more information, see the notice on page 55 of the [UT SELECT Benefits Guide](#) regarding Blue Cross and Blue Shield's separate financial arrangements with providers.



If your travels take you outside of the United States, you have access through the BlueCard Worldwide program to hospitals on almost every continent and to a broad range of medical assistance services.

For more details go to

Additional Tips for Travel Abroad:

- BlueCard Worldwide provides assistance with:
 - Provider location
 - Referral information
 - Medical monitoring
 - Wire transfers/International mailing
 - Translation
 - Coverage verification
 - Currency conversion
- If you need to locate a doctor or hospital, or need medical assistance, call BlueCard Access at (800) 810-BLUE (2583) or call collect at (804) 673-1177, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. A medical assistance coordinator, in conjunction with a medical professional, will arrange hospitalization if necessary. Network benefits will apply for inpatient care at BlueCard Worldwide hospitals.
- In an emergency, go directly to the nearest hospital. Call Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas (BCBSTX) for preauthorization if necessary at (800) 441-9188. The BCBSTX preauthorization number is listed on the back of your UT SELECT Medical ID card for your reference.
- In most cases you will not need to pay for inpatient care at BlueCard Worldwide hospitals in advance. The hospital should submit your claim on your behalf. You will, however, be responsible for the usual out-of-pocket expenses (non-covered services, deductible, copayment, and coinsurance amounts).
- If you do not use a BlueCard Worldwide provider for care, you must pay the doctor or hospital at the time of service and obtain an itemized receipt as proof of payment. You will then need to fully complete an international claim form (available online from <http://www.bcbstx.com/ut>) and submit it to the BlueCard Worldwide Service Center along with your proof of payment in order to receive any applicable reimbursement for covered expenses. Missing information will delay claims processing.
- Except for emergency care, if you are normally eligible to receive in-area benefits, out of network benefits will apply towards covered expenses obtained from non-BlueCard Worldwide providers. If you live outside of Texas and are normally covered at the out-of-area benefits level, the out-of-area level of benefits will continue to apply.
- Remember that bills from international providers may differ significantly from the billing that is typically seen within the United States. The bills may not contain the provider's name and address or other critical information that is needed. Be sure to gather documentation that includes all key details about any services received.



If you have any additional questions or concerns about accessing and maximizing your UT SELECT benefits for medical services while traveling away from home, please contact UT SELECT customer service at (866) 882-2034 or visit the [Blue Access for Members UT SELECT website](#) maintained by BCBSTX or [the Office of Employee-Benefits Benefits While You Travel webpage](#) to learn more.

New Medco.com Pricing Enhancements

Available November 18, 2009, online pricing applications on www.medco.com/ut – including the My Rx Choices® – were updated to provide greater flexibility in claims pricing with deductibles. This is being done in order to give Medco members the most accurate pricing data available via www.medco.com/ut.

The added flexibility allows members to have co-pay and annual costs calculated as though they have (or have not) satisfied their deductible. Previously, all online pricing and savings tools calculated using point-in-time deductible amounts. With this enhancement, members will be able to change this default and recalculate prescription pricing assuming the deductible has been met, or take advantage of real-time deductible pricing.

The new enhancements provide increased visibility and help you make more informed decisions about prescription costs and possible savings opportunities.

Did You Know?

Medco pharmacists are available 24/7 via Medco Customer Service to discuss your prescription-related questions. Also, patients with chronic and complex diseases can contact a Medco Specialist pharmacist who has expertise discussing long-term medications used to treat conditions like Diabetes, High Cholesterol, High Blood Pressure, Asthma, Depression, Cancer, and health concerns specific to women .

If you prefer to email your questions, you can utilize Medco's secure email service and "Ask the Specialist Pharmacist" a question from within the Medco.com/ut website. Most inquiries are responded to within 24 hours. All questions are handled privately and confidentially.

The services provided to you by Medco are available to UT SELECT participants whether the prescription is filled at retail or through Medco By Mail.

Contact Medco Customer Service at 1-800-818-0155 or visit Medco.com/ut for more information.



Roth IRAs and UTSaver Roth 403(b) TSA: There is a Difference!

There has been a lot of talk about Roth Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs) in 2010. In January 2010, there will no longer be an income limit to convert traditional, pre-tax IRAs into post tax Roth IRAs so that participants can pay taxes on saved money now in order to receive funds and earnings tax-free at the time of an eligible distribution.

It is important to note that the University of Texas System does not offer a Roth IRA. Instead, in addition to a UTSaver 457(b) Deferred Compensation Program and the Traditional Pre-tax UTSaver 403(b) Tax Sheltered Annuity (TSA), the UTRetirement Programs offer a UTSaver Roth 403(b) TSA account to all participants.

The most significant difference between a Roth IRA and the UTSaver Roth 403(b) is the annual contribution limit. In 2009, participants can contribute up to \$5,000 to an IRA, plus an additional \$1,000 if over 50. However, participants can contribute as much as \$16,500 a year into the UTSaver Roth 403(b) account plus an additional \$5,500 if over age fifty. However, unlike an IRA, the UTSaver 403(b) accounts cannot be converted from a traditional (pre-tax) to a Roth (post-tax) account.

To read more about the differences between the UTSaver Roth 403(b) TSA and a Roth IRA, please visit our website at www.utretirement.utsystem.edu.



Wellness Wise

December 2009

Keep Holiday Stress to a Minimum: Learn to Say No

For many of us, the holidays were magical in childhood, carefree times to be savored. But then we grew into hordes of harried adults, falling victim to the season's high expectations. Holiday stress has become as much a tradition as the seasonal ham.

"People are overcommitted," says Marc D. Skelton, PhD, PsyD, a psychologist in Laguna Niguel, Calif. "Christmas and other holidays around this time are always supposed to be fun, and you're supposed to do a good job in terms of entertaining friends and family."

In an attempt to live up to the season's tall orders, "people will just run from pillar to post," he says. It's not even "Christmas and other holidays around this time" anymore, some of his clients lament. It's "Stressmas."

We also overload ourselves with inherited traditions, even when they no longer fit into our busy lives, says Elaine Rodino, PhD, a psychologist in Santa Monica, Calif. If one's mother "baked a thousand cookies and gave them to everyone she knew," Rodino says, "people feel obligated to follow the same kinds of things."

But there is a secret to cutting holiday stress: Just say no.

You don't have to bake all those cookies, Rodino says. "You can start your own traditions."

And you can learn to say no to lots of other demands, too, including party invitations that don't entice or a whopping gift list that could clean out a mall.

Holiday Stress-Reduction Tip: Decide What Matters Most

"The spirit of the holidays is gratitude and giving," says Patti Breitman, co-author of the book *How to Say No Without Feeling Guilty*.

Only a Scrooge would dispute that generosity is admirable. "It's very satisfying to offer support to the people we love, help out a neighbor, or do something positive for the community," Breitman writes. But "the conflict arises when we continually agree to things that please everyone but ourselves or when we commit to tasks for which we have no time or desire."

By saying "yes" to every holiday invitation and demand that comes your way, you could wind up exhausted and possibly broke. Instead, reflect on what you cherish most about



the holidays, experts say, whether it's sending greeting cards to maintain relationships, tree trimming, baking, religious observances, seeing family and friends, supporting a charitable cause, or just relaxing.

When you know your priorities, you can turn down the less important things, Breitman says. "It's easier to say 'no' if you know what you're saying 'yes' to."

How to Say No to Holiday Stress

1. Say No to Parties That You Don't Want to Attend

First, "Lavishly thank the person for inviting you," Breitman says. Then apply the "less is more" rule, she says. Skip the long-winded explanation in favor of something short, sweet, and general: "I'm sorry, but I already have plans for that day."

"Your plan may be to take a bubble bath because you're stressed out. Or you're renting a movie and having hot cocoa with your family," Breitman says. "No one has to know what your commitment is."

If the other person insists on knowing why you can't come, the burden of prying will be on him, Breitman writes in her book.

Don't fall into the trap of coming up with new and creative excuses, she says. Instead, paraphrase yourself: "I won't be able to come" or "I already have something on my calendar."

Don't lie and make up an excuse, Skelton says. "You don't want to hurt someone's feelings, so you come up with anything, but later, it might come back to bite you." In other words, you'll feel embarrassed if you're caught, and you'll damage the relationship, too.

If you receive an invitation from someone you genuinely want to see -- just not during the hectic holiday season -- suggest an alternative, Breitman says. For example, you can say, "I can't make it to your party, but let's have lunch after the holidays."

2. Say No to Out-of-Control Gift-Giving

"Nothing saps the holiday spirit like having to run around and buy gifts you don't have time to shop for, can't afford, and that nobody really needs anyway," Breitman says.

If you're fed up, you can opt out of family gift-giving traditions "if you don't mind looking like 'the Grinch who said no to Christmas and other holidays around this time,'" she says.

Or you take a more tactful approach. Consider drawing names for a gift



exchange or buying one gift for a household instead of individual presents. Or experiment with novel alternatives:

- Pool your money and invest in a professionally done family portrait, with prints for everyone.
- Replace material things with a memorable holiday experience. Rent a house in a vacation spot or national park, or gather everyone to attend a special holiday play or performance.

Gift cards to family and friends can be a godsend. But Breitman offers another twist -- especially for those on your list who don't need another cheese gift basket or motorized tie rack.

Tell them, "I'm starting a new tradition. Instead of giving gifts, I'm going to make a contribution to an organization in your honor."

3. **Say No to Unwanted Houseguests**

Your cousin -- the one who recalls at every family gathering how you got stuck in the dog door trying to sneak out of the house in high school -- wants to move his brood into your home for a week, but you know that you'll end up getting on each other's nerves.

"Keeping houseguests away is a lot easier than getting rid of them," Breitman warns. "Once they're under your roof, it's almost impossible to evict someone in a graceful, guilt-free manner."

Some preventive tactics:

- "You're coming to town? Fantastic! A great new hotel just opened -- you'll love it!"
- "Sorry, the house is in no condition for guests right now."
- "I can't wait to see you. Do you need recommendations on a good place to stay?"

4. **Say No to Taking On the Work for a Big Holiday Celebration**

Are you the family's Martha Stewart? The one who knocks herself out every Christmas and other holidays around this time to prepare an elaborate feast for the extended clan?

If festive entertaining leaves you frazzled, Breitman suggests a change of scenery. For example, say, "Everyone has been coming here for Christmas and other holidays around this time for years, but I need a break. Either someone else can do it or we'll all go out to a restaurant."

If you still plan to host, but don't want to shoulder the entire burden, the word "tradition" carries extra clout during the holidays, Breitman says. Use it to your



advantage. Tell your guests, "I'm starting a new tradition. This year, everyone will bring one dish for the meal."

Because others are busy, too, "Make sure that they understand that no one has to make it from scratch," Breitman says.

It's fine if Grandma's soup came from the deli or your nephew shows up with store-bought dinner rolls. As Martha likes to say, it's a good thing.

SOURCES: Marc D. Skelton, PhD, PsyD, psychologist. Elaine Rodino, PhD, psychologist. Patti Breitman, author, *How to Say No Without Feeling Guilty*.

Reviewed by Louise Chang, MD on 12/7/2007 © 2007 WebMD, Inc. All rights reserved.

Resources available to You and your Dependents:

- **Stress Management Lifestyle Improvement Program** teaches you about how stress can affect your life and gives you tools and tips for managing and reducing the impact it has on your health. Learn more at our [Living Well Health Manager powered by WebMD](#).
- **Emotional Health Lifestyle Improvement Program** A positive mood is an important key to continued emotional health and well-being. Changing your lifestyle to maintain a positive mood takes time and real effort. But, with the help of this program, you can do it. And it's worth it: Achieving and maintaining a positive mood can help you lead your daily life with more happiness and well-being, improve your immune system, help prevent illness, reduce stress, and help you stay mentally sharp.

According to your health risk assessment, you are at a low risk for developing depression. That is great news! This program contains valuable information about simple but effective techniques that can really help you keep your mood up and your depression risks as low as possible. Learn more at our [Living Well Health Manager powered by WebMD](#).

Foods That Boost Mood and Fight Holiday Weight Gain

Neither stress nor holiday weight gain need ruin your holidays this year. Here are tips about eating habits and foods that can boost your mood when a stressful situation strikes. You'll feel calmer—and be trimmer—throughout the holiday season.

How Blood Sugar Alters Your Mood

The best way to cope with holiday stress and obligations is to keep your mood and energy stable. You'll not only feel better, but will be much less likely to overeat.



"Choosing foods that your body absorbs slowly keeps blood sugar steady, maintaining your feelings on an even keel," says Elizabeth Somer, RD, author of *Food & Mood*. Slow-digesting foods include whole-grain cereal with milk, brown rice with salmon or chicken breast, a peanut butter sandwich on whole-wheat bread, or a spinach salad and half a turkey sandwich with milk. You want to eat either quality carbohydrates or carbohydrates mixed with protein, she says.

Foods that absorb quickly, such as sugar, white bread, or anything refined, spike blood sugar high; then cause it to suddenly crash. After a crash, you'll feel crabby and hungry, and end up grabbing chocolate bars or candy -- setting yourself up for yet another blood sugar dive, Somer says.

Boost Your Mood With Feel-Good Serotonin

High-protein diets may help you drop pounds, but they won't do much to raise your spirits. That's because your body craves serotonin, the feel-good chemical found in foods that boost your mood.

"Carbohydrates are essential for moving tryptophan (the amino acid that makes up serotonin) across the brain," says Susan M. Kleiner, PhD, RD, co-author of *The Good Mood Diet*. When your blood sugar drops, less carbohydrate is available in the bloodstream; less tryptophan moves across into the brain and your mood can plummet.

In fact, researchers at Arizona State University found that after just two weeks, a very low-carb diet increased fatigue and reduced the desire of overweight adults to exercise.

Serotonin fights holiday weight gain, too. "It tells you when you've had enough by causing satiety (a feeling of fullness) and reducing your appetite," says Judith J. Wurtman, PhD, co-author of *The Serotonin Power Diet*.

Nix Stress-Induced Mood Swings

Although experts generally advise avoiding simple carbs, afternoon mood swings beg for fast fixes.

"If you feel grumpy in the afternoon, eat only carbohydrates," Somer says. Eating protein *with* carbs blocks serotonin production, while high-fat foods keep digestion slow. Wurtman agrees. "When you're stressed, reach for carbs -- simple sugars that digest quickly," she says. "Bingeing on simple carbohydrates is your body's natural way of dealing with stress -- but you can't include protein or fat."

"Abort an afternoon stress binge with a power gel called Gu," Wurtman says. "It's made of pure sugar (glucose), contains 100 calories and zero fat, and is digested quickly; allowing serotonin to make you feel better fast." Research conducted in Wurtman's



weight loss center showed that women who consumed a pack of Gu found it so sweet and filling that they had no desire for more.

Keep in mind that Gu takes time to work, she tells WebMD. Glucose may be a quick fix, but it isn't instant. Tell yourself, "I know this is going to work," Just eat your snack; then distract yourself with something you enjoy. In 20 minutes, the food you've consumed will abort bingeing on high-sugar, high-fat foods like weight loss sabotaging holiday treats.

If Gu is not for you, Wurtman recommends trying low-fat foods with carbs such as a baked potato, graham crackers, popcorn, pretzels, or low-fat cereal, which is also loaded with healthy fiber.

Food and Diet Tips to Keep Your Mood Stable

Besides carbohydrates, studies indicate that many other foods -- along with healthful eating habits -- may help our moods and somewhat ease depression.

- **Omega-3 fatty acids:** Population studies show that people who infrequently eat fish, which is high in omega-3 fatty acids, are more likely to suffer depression. So add foods rich in omega-3s to your diet. Good sources of omega-3 fatty acids include fatty fish such as salmon, tuna, mackerel, and sardines. Other good food sources include flaxseed, nuts, and dark, green leafy vegetables.
- **Vitamin B-12:** Studies also indicate that people who eat diets low in vitamin B-12 may be at higher risk of depression. Good food sources of vitamin B-12 include lean and low-fat animal products, such as fish and low-fat dairy foods.
- **Selenium:** Preliminary small studies indicate that selenium may help improve mild depression. Although more research is needed, many foods rich in selenium are healthy regardless of your mood. It can't hurt to add these to your diet: seafood, nuts, lean meat, whole grains, beans, and low-fat dairy.

Frequent small meals: Eating frequent, small meals of healthy foods helps keep your blood sugar levels even, avoiding diet-related mood swings. Eat a small meal or snack every three to four hours to give you sustained energy and keep your blood sugar stable.

Fight Holiday Weight Gain

It's easy to feel overwhelmed during the holiday season -- what with shopping, parties, decorating, baking, and the inevitable stress of unwanted obligations. But a healthy diet not only helps boost your mood, it also helps you fight holiday weight gain. Try these tips to get through the holiday season in a good mood without gaining weight:

- **Eat breakfast!** If you skip it, what you eat for the rest of the day won't matter, Somer says. Breakfast-eaters report maintaining a better mood and more energy throughout the day, studies show.



- Drink water. "The first symptom of dehydration is fatigue," says Somer. If you're dragging your feet, don't dig in the holiday treats you've been baking. Instead, down a glass or two of water; then see if you're still hungry. Not drinking enough water is the first thing that will impact your mood, Kleiner tells WebMD. "Without it, you won't be able to exercise at peak levels, and you won't burn fat as readily."
- Drink nonfat milk. "It has the tryptophan you need for your brain, plus the natural carbohydrate that assists its transport," Kleiner says. "It's also a fabulous energy drink, and an excellent way to rehydrate both before and after exercise."
- Hit your usual holiday parties, but avoid alcohol. You may feel relaxed in the short term, but drinking interrupts sleep and increases depression and anxiety -- not the best way to boost your mood.
- Lose the bowls of high-fat foods like chocolate, and replace them with small low-fat crackers, popcorn, pretzels, and hard candy.

Fall and winter tend to increase carbohydrate cravings. "Instead of trying to ignore them or reaching for chocolate, cookies or ice cream, plan portion-controlled carb snacks at least once or twice a day, such as 3/4 cup of crunchy cereal," Wurtman says. They'll help keep your mood even and your waistline small.

Reap the Rewards

"Alter your eating habits, and you'll notice a change within just two weeks," Somer says. "Your body will reward you with more energy, and your mind with a calmer, positive, more stable mood."

During the stress-filled holiday season, who could ask for more?

SOURCES: Elizabeth Somer, RD, author of *Food & Mood*. Judith J. Wurtman, PhD, co-author of *The Serotonin Power Diet*; co-founder of the Adara weight loss centers. Susan M. Kleiner, PhD, RD, co-author of *The Good Mood Diet*. Wurtman, R.J. *Scientific American*, January 1989: pp 68-75. White, A.M. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, October 2007; vol 107: pp 1792-1796. WebMD Weight Loss Clinic-Feature: "Top 10 Ways to Boost Your Energy." WebMD Medical Reference: "Diet for Depression."

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Healthy Recipe of the Month

December 2009

Healthy Holiday Food and Diet Tips

As much as we look forward to holiday parties and dinners, many of us fear enjoying it too much – and packing on the pounds.

Indeed, the average American consumes approximately 4,500 calories and 229 grams fat from eating a traditional Thanksgiving dinner. And that doesn't include breakfast, lunch, or late-night snacking on leftovers.

Studies show that the average American gains 1 to 2 pounds during the holiday season. And, those extra pounds tend to become permanent baggage. Year after year, those pounds can add up, and contribute to overweight or obesity later in life.

Although we may not all gain weight over the holidays, there is no question we tend to eat and drink more -- and exercise less. With the hustle and bustle of holiday shopping, parties and festive traditions, healthy eating and exercise are usually the first things to go.

No one wants to be on a strict diet during the holidays. We want to enjoy the bounty of traditional favorite foods. How can you enjoy the holidays without gaining weight? Dietitians say it's not so hard, with a little planning.

- First, if you've been trying to lose weight, when mid-November rolls around, shift your focus from weight loss to weight maintenance. "The holiday season is tough enough to just maintain your weight let alone try to lose weight. So do yourself a favor," says Joan Salge Blake, MS, RD, Boston University clinical assistant professor. "Allow yourself a few treats and set your goal on weight maintenance so you can enjoy the holiday foods and wait until the New Year to get back on your weight loss plan."
- Second, if you are the host of dinners and parties, trim calories wherever you can without compromising tradition or flavor. You'll help everyone enjoy the bountiful food without packing on the pounds. Keep in mind, experts say, it is much harder to lose weight than it is not to gain it in the first place.

Here are 10 tips to lighten up your holiday meals.

1. Shop Smart for Healthy Holidays

Plan your menu to include plenty of fruits, vegetables, lean meats, seafood, whole grains, and low-fat dairy.



Consult the nutrition label to choose foods rich in nutrients but lower in fat, calories, and sugar.

To shave calories, go easy when adding nuts, cheese, cream sauces, gravy, butter, and whipped cream.

2. Start the Party Light

Most appetizers tend to be loaded with calories. And it is so easy to over eat them before the meal.

Make it easier on your guests by offering light and satisfying appetizers. For tempting yet healthy appetizers, offer shrimp cocktails, whole-grain crackers with reduced-fat cheese, vegetables with a low-fat yogurt dip, or fresh fruit skewers.

3. Harness the Diet Power of Produce

Add more simple vegetable and fruit dishes to your menu instead of heavy dishes with sauces. Your guests will fill up on healthy fiber without lots of extra calories.

For example, green bean almandine with a squeeze of lemon is healthier than traditional green bean casserole. Simple peas or corn are healthier than creamed peas or corn. But if you must have casserole, use low-fat soup, increase the veggies, and top it with a crunchy whole-grain cereal instead of fried onions.

4. Go Frozen in Winter

Fresh is usually the best when fruits and vegetables are in season. But when prices are high in winter, head to the frozen food aisle.

“Frozen fruits and vegetables are usually less expensive and can be more nutritious because they are picked at their peak ripeness and frozen immediately” says American Dietetic Association spokeswoman Sarah Krieger, RD. Buy frozen produce in bags, use only what you need, and save more by not wasting spoiled produce.

Canned foods can also be a healthy option. Read the nutrition labels to find fruits and vegetables with less added sodium and sugar, Krieger says. Reduce the sodium and sugar solutions even more by rinsing the vegetable or fruit under cold water before you cook.

5. Respect Special Requests

As you plan your holiday menu, ask if guests have any food preferences or intolerances. For example, a dear friend may be lactose intolerant. A favorite cousin may have cut red meat from his diet.



You can't please everyone. But you can include a wide variety of healthy foods. Then, your guests can pick and choose, filling their plate with a satisfying meal no matter their food issue.

6. Shave Calories With Simple Swaps

Create healthier versions of your holiday favorites by shaving calories wherever you can.

"Simple swaps of lower-fat ingredients are easy ways to save calories -- and no one will even notice the difference" says Cheryl Forberg, RD, nutritionist for the television series, *The Biggest Loser*.

Use chicken stock, fat-free yogurt, light cream cheese, and low-fat milk in place of high-fat ingredients. Substitute non-fat yogurt or applesauce for oil in baked goods.

7. Roast or Grill for Rich Flavor With Fewer Calories

Roasting or grilling meat, seafood, vegetables, and potatoes, is a simple, low-calorie cooking style that brings out the natural sweetness and flavor in foods.

Roasted sweet potatoes with a sprinkle of cinnamon sugar and a spritz of butter spray are delicious substitutes for the traditional calorie-laden casserole.

Grilled pork chops served with a mango salsa are great to replace pork chops slathered in mushroom cream.

8. Serve Healthier Desserts

For dessert, try chocolate-dipped strawberries for a colorful and delicious finale.

If you want to offer pie, choose the healthier pumpkin pie. Make it with non-fat evaporated milk. Top it with fat-free whipped topping.

9. Spritz Your Drinks

Eggnog and other holiday beverages can add a huge number of calories. Offer your guests plenty of low-cal beverages such as diet soda, sparkling water, or a low-calorie punch.

Alcohol releases inhibitions and can increase hunger. So do yourself and guests a favor: Offer simple alcohol choices such as wine and beer without the heavy cocktail mixers.

10. Plan and Scan to Avoid Holiday Weight Gain



“In anticipation that you will be eating and drinking more than usual, try to trim your calories and make sure you fit in fitness everyday so you can enjoy a ‘controlled’ feast without the guilt” says Joan Salge Blake, MS, RD, clinical assistant professor, Boston University and American Dietetic Association spokeswoman.

“Scan the buffet and fill your plate with foods that are simply prepared, without sauces or fried, sit down and take your time to taste and savor every bite,” she says. Resist the urge to go back for more by waiting at least 20 minutes for your brain to register that you are comfortably full. If you are still hungry, eat more vegetables and drink water.

Remember, the holidays are marked with many traditions, but the real meaning is about spending time with family and friends.

If you keep these tips in mind, you'll get through the holidays without gaining a pound. And if you do splurge, don't beat yourself up, the experts say. Just get right back to normal eating and exercising, and try to do a better job at the next party.

SOURCES: Cheryl Forberg, RD, chef, nutritionist on The Biggest Loser television show. Sarah Krieger, MPH, RD, American Dietetic Association spokeswoman and chef. Joan Salge Blake, MS, RD, clinical assistant professor, Boston University and American Dietetic Association spokeswoman. New England Journal of Medicine, vol 342: pp 861-867, No. 12, March 23, 2000.

Reviewed by [Brunilda Nazario, MD](#) on 8/24/2009

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Resources:

- **Nutrition Lifestyle Improvement Program** A healthy lifestyle is the key to continued well-being. Changing your lifestyle for the better takes time and real effort. But, with the help of this program, you can do it. And it's worth it: A nutritious diet reduces your risk of disease and helps you maintain a healthy weight.

Now that you are making healthier dietary choices, you must be wondering what the next steps might be. This program has lots of great information to keep you moving towards optimal nutrition. Learn more at our [Living Well Health Manager powered by WebMD](#).

- **Weight Management Lifestyle Improvement Program** A healthy lifestyle is the key to continued well-being. Changing your lifestyle for the better takes time and real effort. But, with the help of this program, you can do it. And it's worth it: Regular exercise and healthy eating can keep you fit, prevent illness, improve your mood, and get you to a healthier weight. Learn more at our [Living Well Health Manager powered by WebMD](#).

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Featured Resources

December 2009

A More Dynamic Way To Learn

Our Living Well Health Manager powered by WebMD Interactives include a wide selection of dynamic tools designed to help you make smart decisions about your health. Use a variety of calculators to determine your BMI, Target Heart Rate, Calorie Counter, Height Predictor, Metabolism, and more.

Start using these tools today! Current members just log into the member website. Not a member? Just register online at www.webmdhealth.com/ut and complete your HQ now and enjoy all the benefits!

Once you log in, select "**Take Action**" on the left side navigation bar. Select any of the Interactives Tool available to you.

Living Well Health Manager, Powered by WebMD

We know good health is important to you and your family. That's why Effective July 1, 2009, the University of Texas System will offers you a great new resource called the '**Living Well Health Manager, powered by WebMD.**' This personalized health information resource gives you and your family free and easy access to the information you need to make smart choices about your health. [Learn how to begin living up to your potential.](#)

Top Questions to Ask Your Doctor

We believe that an understanding of the relationship between health and cost of care and better communication with your doctor will ultimately increased use of self care practices. Below we have listed several top modifiable/preventable conditions with questions to ask your doctor:

- [Blood Pressure](#)
- [Cholesterol](#)
- [Diabetes](#)
- [Depression](#)
- [Metabolic Syndrome](#)

To view and print these top questions go to
<http://www.livingwell.utsystem.edu/myhealth.htm#drQ>