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News Release

## **Holiday Calorie Count**

Holidays are the time to celebrate with family and friends. Of course most celebrations center on meals and refreshments. Rich, calorie laden foods are the norm at these festivities and no one wants to be labeled the party pooper for not indulging. So, how do you maintain your healthy diet standards without appearing to be rude to your host?

One holiday meal could have as many as 5,000 calories. One pound is 3,500 calories. This means a person can gain approximately one and a half pounds per meal. If the typical person ate only one holiday meal, weight control could be maintained by doubling up on exercise. The problem is most people do not eat just one holiday dinner. Celebrations at work, at church, with immediate family, with extended family and with friends can cause a person to eat five or more mega meals in one week. Plus, people tend to snack and eat leftovers between meals. Exercise is usually held to a minimum because people are sitting in a car traveling to their destination, they are sitting during meals and conversation and they are sitting to watch a ball game or a movie. Overeating and a lack of exercise can easily lead to a five pound weight gain in less than one week.

Have a plan of action before the holiday. First, remember to drink several glasses of water before a meal or party. The water will give you a sense of fullness and help you to resist the temptation to overeat. Second, limit your portion size. By eating half the serving size, you have eliminated half of the calories. Third, try to do something physical while you have a crowd gathered. A game of tag football in the backyard before watching the game could burn off a few calories. A walk or a bicycle ride around the neighborhood could add activity to the day. Most importantly, try to do something besides just sitting and talking or watching television.

For persons on restricted diets watching calories may not be their major concern, holidays present a host of problems for gracefully declining certain foods. It is important for people on specialized diets to stick to the regimen set forth by their health care provider. One of the best ways to

maintain control in their situation is to carry a dish that they can eat and greatly restrict portion sizes of other foods.

*For more information please contact Jennifer Dutton, Regional Extension Agent—Human Nutrition, Diet & Health, at the St. Clair County office at (205) 338-9416 or email at [jld0021@aces.edu](mailto:jld0021@aces.edu).*

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