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*A Moment With Dr. Moore,  
our PhD Psychologist/  
Eating Behaviorist*

## An New Eating Proposal for Holiday Success

It's that time of year again. The days are shorter, the weather is cooling, the leaves are changing, and holiday temptations are just around the corner! It probably comes as no surprise that holiday weight gain is common. Studies have shown that typical holiday weight gain can range from 1 to 5 pounds, with overweight people gaining more than their healthy weight peers. Despite the many temptations ahead, holiday weight gain is not inevitable. We just have to take an active role in determining our own eating behavior.

### *Taking Control of Holiday Eating*

When we think about all the reasons we eat, we find that external or outside cues drive the majority of our behavior. We may find ourselves munching because a bowl of candy is within arms reach, because our beloved coworker baked cookies, again, or because the cold weather just calls for a large peppermint mocha with whip cream. Social pressures play an equally powerful role. It may seem just down right impossible to refuse that homemade bread, turn down that gift of Christmas cookies, or decline those invitations to all of the wonderful holiday parties that are packed to the brim with food and drinks. If that wasn't enough, holiday stress may even have us eating more than we desire. All of these situations have one thing in common - - - the environment determines when, what, and how much we eat.

This holiday season, vow to take back control of your eating behavior. You are in charge, not your environment. In the above examples, you may have noticed that decisions to start eating had very little to do with internal hunger signals. This new proposal for holiday success asks you to use hunger as your guide. Although deceptively simple, this scientifically proven strategy can help you reduce overeating and associated feelings of guilt, shame, and disappointment.

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### **Thanksgiving is ONE MEAL not one MONTH!**

Just some gentle reminders about how what you eat on 11/26 will impact how you feel on 11/27! This is a **2013 kcal meal**. What will you be eating?

1 Cup of Eggnog	343 kcal
1/2 Cup of Mixed Nuts	440 kcal
1/2 Cup of Stuffing	180 kcal
1/2 Cup of Mashed Potatoes	150 kcal
1/2 Cup of Gravy	150 kcal
6oz. White and Dark Turkey	340 kcal
1 piece (1/8 of a 9") Apple Pie	410 kcal

### **Doctor's Orders by Kent C. Sasse, M.D., MPH, FACS, Medical Director of iMetabolic**

**Eat earlier.** -Shift the majority of the calories you consume to earlier in the day and cut out the late-night eating and snacks.

Move dinner up so that you can comfortably stop any intake of calories by 7 p.m. We know that the body tends to hold on to calories consumed late at night and burns calories eaten early in the day (Weigle, 1997). In fact, people who consume the exact same net amount of calories and burn the same amount of calories under controlled settings will actually gain more weight when they eat those calories late in the night and lose more weight when they burn those same calories early in the day (Weigle, 1997 and Holt, 1999).

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## *Let Your Appetite Be Your Guide*

When you engage in appetite-driven eating, you use internal cues (i.e., hunger and fullness), rather than external cues (e.g., food available, other people eating, serving size) to make decisions about when to start and when to stop eating.

To engage in this practice follow these steps:

**Schedule 3 planned meals and 3 planned snacks each day.** Try to eat approximately every 2.5 to 3.0 hours. For example, you may have breakfast at 7:00 AM, a morning snack at 10:00 AM, lunch at 12:30 PM, an afternoon snack at 3:30 PM, and dinner at 6:00 PM, and an evening snack at 8:30 PM. Try to eat only during scheduled meal and snack times, unless you experience moderate physical hunger before your next scheduled meal. This strategy is helpful for three main reasons: 1) It eliminates grazing, which never quite allows your body and mind to experience clear hunger and fullness; 2) It allows your body and mind to become more aware of what it feels like to be hungry and what it feels like to be full; and 3) It prevents overeating and feelings of deprivation by keeping your body constantly fueled.

**Eat when moderately hungry and stop when moderately full.** This strategy sounds simple enough, but most of us are not accustomed to eating in this way. We often start eating when food is present and stop when the food is gone. Eating when we are moderately hungry prevents overeating by catching hunger early - rather than waiting until we are very hungry, and are likely to overeat. Stopping at moderate fullness is like paying attention to a “warning” sign. It gives us an opportunity to respect our body’s first signals of fullness (stomach distention) and stop before we feel too stuffed. Imagine there is a stop sign at the end of your street, but it is after a blind curve. Because people always run this sign, a “stop sign ahead” sign was erected just before the curve. Paying attention to this warning sign helps us slow down and stop early, before we speed through the stop sign. Stopping at moderate fullness works the same way. To do this, we must eat mindfully - slow down, listen to your body, and stop when your stomach feels moderately full. Keep track by using a 7 point scale, where 4 is neutral, 1 is too hungry, and 7 is too full. Aim to eat between 3 (moderate hunger) and 5 (moderate fullness).

**Make Conscious Decisions to Start and Stop Eating.** Each time you recognize a desire to eat, ask yourself: Why am I eating right now? Is it mealtime? Is it because I am moderately hungry? Am I responding to something in my environment or to people in my environment? Or, did the desire to eat just pop into my mind? Likewise each time you stop eating, ask yourself: Am I stopping now because I am moderately full? Did the serving size or the packaging provide a helpful external signal to stop? Am I stopping now because of other things or people in my environment? You will be surprised to learn how often your eating decisions are influenced by the environment. Recognize which external cues help you eat according to your appetite and which do not. Make a conscious decision to eat when moderately hungry and to stop eating when moderately full. If it is not a scheduled meal time and you have an urge to eat, distract yourself with a pleasant activity. Ask yourself if there is an unmet psychological need (e.g., Am I eating because I’m bored, lonely, or stressed?). If you have a strong urge to eat a particularly tempting holiday food and think you might feel deprived if you do not eat it, make a conscious decision to eat it without overdoing it. Stop at moderate fullness. This type of eating is helpful and is called anti-deprivation eating because it will prevent you from overeating in response to feelings of deprivation.

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This 3 step plan may seem simple, but eating in response to your appetite is a skill that takes practice. Linda Craighead, Ph.D. and her colleagues have found that people can dramatically change the way they eat after committing to a minimum of 4 weeks of consistently engaging and monitoring their appetite guided eating. Take a deep breath and commit to appetite guided eating over the holidays. Enjoy and let your appetite be your guide! Happy Holidays!