

HOPE helping make healthy holiday tradition

Cydney Baron / Staff Writer | Posted: Friday, November 20, 2015, 4:52 pm

Healthy holiday traditions are something to be thankful for.

For many, Thanksgiving is about family, food, and football. More often than not the average American over-indulges on Thanksgiving and doesn't stop until time for New Years resolutions.

This year, Mayes County HOPE Coalition urges families to try something new—making healthy holiday traditions.

“Prepare in advance, families tend to feel the need to fix a huge amount of food on Thanksgiving and include every traditional side they can think of, regardless of the number of guests that will actually be there,” the HOPE Coalition members said. “Instead, get a head count this year and plan accordingly. If you will only have a table of eight, then you don't need to fix three pumpkin pies. You also don't need to fix every meat and every side and every dessert in the history of Thanksgiving.”

Instead, they suggest talking to family members to find out everyone's favorite dish, then preparing the right amount.

Providing healthy “grazing options” is another HOPE tip.

“It never fails that family members will get hungry before the meal is ready. We tend to set out cookies and candy and other sweets to fend them off until it's time to eat. Try providing healthier grazing options. Instead of the sweets, set other foods on the counter for them to snack on. Offer cut up veggies and light dip, nuts, hummus, celery and pimento cheese, or even a tray with pickles/olives on it,” they said.

Making healthy substitutions is another way to save on calories without missing out on favorite holiday dishes.

Some healthy substitutions include:

- Avoid frying your turkey this year and replace it with a baked turkey instead. If you are having trouble with your turkey being dry, cook it ahead of time, then slice it or tear it from the bone. Put the meat in a crock pot with salt, pepper, rosemary, and thyme and serve it from there.
- Instead of using real butter and whole milk when mixing your mashed potatoes, try using light butter and 1 percent or skim milk.
- For those of you watching carbs, substitute cauliflower for those mashed potatoes, and again, mix them with light butter and low fat milk.
- When preparing glazed sweet potatoes, use honey and apricot nectar instead of sugar.
- Replace one of your heavy, more fattening side dishes with a fruit salad. Cut up your favorite fruit and mix it with vanilla Greek yogurt and serve cold.
- To offer a healthy dessert option, try mixing a moist strawberry cake mix with a can of Sprite (in place of the eggs, oil, and water) and bake for approximately 20 min. When it cools down, use light cool whip and fresh strawberries for the icing.

“Drinking pop and alcohol with Thanksgiving meals will highly increase your calorie intake without you even realizing it sometimes,” they said. “Calories in soda, sweet tea, and beer/liquor are empty calories that make you full without providing any nutritional benefit. If you want to save calories for those favorite holiday dishes, it's best to avoid drinking your calories and opt for water instead. If you need some flavor, try drinking unsweetened tea or flavored water.”

Instead of slipping into a turkey-come HOPE suggests making memories by getting whole family up and moving.

“After the plates are empty and the kitchen is clean, it’s time to get moving. Avoid going straight to the couch or bed for nap time, and instead go for a family walk in the neighborhood. If you need to let your food settle for a few minutes, then take 30 min-1 hour to let it digest. But the best way to avoid a food coma is to walk it off,” they said. “And if you are still feeling the effects of a full stomach the next morning, enter a local Turkey Trot as a family and burn your holiday calories running or walking a 5K.”

HOPE said don’t just watch football, get up and play.

“We realize families have honored traditions, and we are not suggesting you completely give those up, but sometimes simple adjustments can make a big impact on your health. So, we encourage you to try and make changes where you are willing, keeping a healthy balance at the same time. Family is about enjoying each other and our favorite food ... but it can also be about trying new foods and new activities that keep us healthy and enjoying our families for years to come.”

HOPE said making healthy choices as a family is something to be thankful for long after the pie is gone.