

Christmas Tips

Christmas is a mixture of many things – presents, excitement for children [and adults] and a busy time for everyone. But if you or a member of your family has diabetes, Christmas can be a worrying and stressful time too, especially if this is your first time with diabetes. Celebrating Christmas is not just a time for presents but also about food! We all eat a lot more than we should and we tend to eat much more of the sort of food that is not exactly ideal for children or adults with diabetes. It doesn't matter whether you are taking insulin for Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes or tablets for Type 2, you can't take a day off from it but it is important to remember that it is a time to be enjoyed with family and friends.

Christmas dinner - cutting calories and carbs but not the enjoyment

By Dr Mabel Blades, Consultant Dietician



Christmas is a time for celebration and enjoying lovely food. Many people go out to several functions at this time of year when a Christmas dinner is offered.

Here are some ideas for how to cut calories and carbohydrate in an easy way. All calculations have been based on average portion sizes, so if you eat large ones then the calories and carbohydrate will add up even more.

Traditional dinner

Portion of roast turkey, chipolata wrapped in bacon, stuffing, roast potatoes, brussel sprouts and gravy

Christmas pudding and brandy butter

Mince pie

3 small glasses of wine

123g carbohydrate, 83g fat, 33.6g saturated fat and 4g salt, 1736kcal

Traditional dinner with a few reductions - saves over 300 calories

Portion of roast turkey, chipolata wrapped in bacon, stuffing, roast potatoes, brussel sprouts and gravy

Christmas pudding and custard made with skimmed milk

Mince pie

2 small glasses of wine but drunk as 3 glasses as a spritzer

145g carbohydrate, 51g fat, 13.0g saturated fat and 3.7g salt, 1450kcal
(Note the carbohydrate increases as the milk in the custard has more carbohydrate than the brandy butter but less calories and fat.)

Traditional dinner with no mince pie or wine saves a further 400 calories and halves the amount of fat

Portion of roast turkey, chipolata wrapped in bacon, stuffing, roast potatoes, brussel sprouts and gravy

Christmas pudding and custard made with skimmed milk

114g carbohydrate, 39g fat, 13.0g saturated fat and 3.2g salt, 1040kcal

Further reductions can be made by:

- Cutting down on the potatoes and dry roasting them.
- The chipolata wrapped in bacon can be omitted.
- The plate can be filled up with extra vegetables, such as carrots or brussels.
- The Christmas pudding can be home made to a lower calorie recipe.
- Fruit salad can be substituted for the Christmas pudding.

Christmas swaps

Food	Calorie Content (kcal)	Carbohydrate Value (g)
Starters		
Bowl of soup	30-70	10-15
150g Melon	40-50	10
Mains		
Chipolata in bacon	102	1
80g vegetables like sprouts	20	0-5
50g stuffing	135	10-15
100g Roast potatoes	536	20
100g Dry roast potatoes	140	30
110 g Turkey roast	186	0
Afters		
80-100g fresh fruit salad or 2 satsumas	40-70	10-15
100g Christmas pudding	329	50-55
50 g Brandy butter	320	0
150g Custard with skimmed milk	120	20
25g Cheese	104	0
2 digestive biscuits	140	20
2 plain crackers	95	10
2 oat cakes	80	10
1 scoop of ice cream	70	10
Mince pie	239	30
Alcohol		
Small glass wine (125)	85	-
Spirits tot	55	-

Christmas pudding

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Having looked at most luxury style Christmas puddings as well as recipes for homemade ones using traditional ingredients like suet, I found that most provided around 600kcal and 80g carbohydrate per portion. I was given the challenge of developing a lower calorie and carbohydrate pudding.

This is what I made and it makes 8 small portions and each portion provides 204kcal 43g carbohydrate, 1.4 g fat, 0.3g saturated fat and 0.3g salt. It was quick to make and also cheap.

Ingredients

200g dried mixed fruit
100ml water
10 ml red wine
1 tbsp oat bran
1 tbsp black treacle
200g self raising flour
1 tsp mixed spices
1 420g can of prunes drained
1 egg

- Mix the wine and water together.
- Pour the dried fruit into a dish then pour on the wine and water mixture.
- Leave overnight in the fridge. This soaking step is important as it plumps up the fruit.
- To this mix add the oat bran and return the dish to the fridge
- Take the stones out of the prunes and puree - if you have not got a liquidizer, a potato masher works well.
- Add to the mix, then add the treacle and mix through.
- Sift together the flour and spices and add to the mix.
- Finally beat in the egg.
- If the mix seems a bit dry add a little skimmed milk.
- Pour into a one and a half pint basin and smooth down or alternatively pour into 8 small basins.

Put in the microwave and cook for 7 minutes on high.

Take out of the microwave and let stand for 5 minutes.

Cook again for 7 minutes on high and again let stand.

Test the inside is cooked with a knife or skewer – if not cooked, then cook again for 5

minutes and allow to stand then check it.

The smaller puddings will cook more quickly and so will a pudding in a shallower basin. If you do not want to cook in a microwave, it can be baked for an hour in a medium oven in a covered basin standing in a bowl of water.

Serve with custard or ice cream or as it is very low in fat a little brandy butter

NOTE: The pudding will not keep for long so freeze it or cook a day or so before required.

- You can use all wine, port or brandy to soak the fruit if you wish but this will boost the calories. If you do not want to use alcohol soak the fruit in apple juice
- Extra fruit can be added to the mixed dried fruit – dried cranberries are nice.
- If you want to have a cold pudding, the mixed dried fruit with added cranberries soaked in alcohol or fruit juice goes well with vanilla ice cream. You can even layer this up in a pudding basin and freeze it.
- If you want to use pureed apples instead of the prunes it will give a paler colour.
- If you do not want to cook a pudding then many of the supermarkets economy puddings seem to be lower in calories than the luxury ones.

Remember!

- Excitement tends to lower blood glucose levels; this especially applies to children with Type 1 diabetes.
- Stress tends to raise blood sugars.
- Eating more than usual can raise blood sugars.
- Exercise lowers blood sugars, so a walk after a big Christmas dinner will help to lower them.
- Try to keep meal times as near as possible to your usual times but if meals are later, then remember to have a snack.
- Avoid keeping extra food around as this will tempt you to eat what you want, when you want.
- Maintain your blood glucose testing routine as far as possible and test more often if you're eating frequently or at irregular times.
- Stay active - exercise reduces stress, burns excess calories and helps control blood sugars.
- Pamper yourself – whether this is taking a relaxing bath or curling up with a book, make time for yourself as this can help to prevent holiday stress from building up. Get plenty of rest to prevent holiday tiredness.
- Planning – make sure that you have enough insulin and other medications to cover the Christmas and New Year holidays.

Food Tips

How to decrease sugar in your favourite recipes

Use less sugar, use sugar-free gelatins for desserts, substitute sweeteners for sugar and/or substitute sugar-free drinks in punches or other drinks.

Christmas Dinner – in terms of carbohydrate content, it is similar to Sunday lunch with some extras, such as cranberry sauce and stuffing. You aren't obliged to eat everything, so choose what you like best and pass on the rest. If you want to eat everything, do so but just have smaller portions. Take a family walk after lunch to walk off the extras – it's good for everyone and a convenient way of lowering blood sugars without anyone else thinking about it!

Mince Pies – make your own so that they have thinner pastry and are smaller than bought ones! Adding finely chopped apples to bought mincemeat will reduce the sugar content.

Nibbles – as well as the usual carbohydrate-containing nibbles, have plates of raw vegetables and low calorie dips around. Nuts and dried fruit are a good idea too – two tablespoons of nuts are only 10 grams of carbohydrate and half to one tablespoon of dried fruit is the same. Fruit is always good too – there are 10 grams of carbohydrate in a medium sized banana, apple, orange, two plums, two tangerines and a handful of grapes or cherries.

A useful little book...

'Carb Counter' is a very useful little book which gives the carbohydrate values of over 2000 foods – plus calories, protein, fat and fibre.

It can be ordered from IDDT at the reduced price of £2.99, telephone 01604 622837.

Treating a Christmas hypo

The standard treatment for a hypo [hypoglycaemia, low blood glucose] is a glass of orange juice but if it is a mild hypo and you are able to eat and drink, then have chocolate as a treat. Chocolate contains more fat which slows down the action of its sugar content, but it is Christmas after all! [See IDDT Leaflet 'Hypoglycaemia' for general advice on hypoglycaemia.]

Then there's alcohol!

When you drink, your liver decreases its ability to release glucose so that it can clean the alcohol from your blood. Because glucose production is shut down, hypoglycaemia [low blood sugar] becomes a risk for people with diabetes, particularly if you drink on an empty stomach or shortly after taking insulin or glucose-lowering tablets. It takes two hours for

just one ounce of alcohol to metabolise and leave your system so the risk continues long after your glass is empty.

Facts about alcohol and diabetes:

- Alcohol lowers blood glucose levels so increasing the risk of hypoglycaemia [low blood sugars] not just while drinking but also over the next 24 hours or longer.
- Alcohol impairs judgement, so you may not realise that you are hypo and will not treat it with sugary food. You may also be mistaken for being drunk by others around you and so they will not offer help. Both of these situations could lead to severe hypoglycaemia.
- The carbohydrates that we drink may contain carbohydrates but these do not offset the blood sugar lowering effect of the alcohol, so they should not be counted as part of your overall carbohydrate consumption. [Remember that while Pils is a low sugar lager, it has higher alcohol content, so it is not a good drink for people with diabetes.]

Having diabetes does not mean that you cannot drink but there are some golden rules that people with diabetes should follow:

- Only drink in moderation – sensible advice whether or not you have diabetes.
- Learn by experience how alcohol affects you – everyone is different.
- Take the appropriate steps to prevent a hypo and if necessary lower your insulin dose at the meal prior to going out for a drink.
- The best time to drink alcohol is with a meal. If you are not having a meal with your alcohol then it is a good idea to nibble carbohydrate [e.g. crisps] throughout the evening.
- Never drink alcohol before a meal.
- Have an extra bedtime snack before going to bed. Remember that alcohol could lower your blood glucose during the night while you are asleep, resulting in a night hypo. The alcohol may also make you sleep more soundly so that the hypo warnings may not wake you.

Don't let diabetes spoil your day!

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