

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 | - |

Buffet ideas to get the taste buds flowing!

These recipes are about inspiration, not ones to be followed slavishly but ideas to get the Christmas taste buds flowing. If you think they are too different from your normal recipes then adapt them a little but so that you are still moving towards a lower fat type of recipe. So often buffets feature sausage rolls, sandwiches, mince pies and other such rich fat nibbles. Nothing wrong with them other than they are a bit higher in fat and salt and can be a bit boring. So here are a few low fat ideas. All are calculated out so they will give you some idea as to how to fit them into your diet.

Vegetable Kebabs

(Portions – 12 kebabs)

4 large carrots

24 cherry tomatoes

1 large cucumber

Method

Slice the carrots into thin strips using a cheese slicer the type that cuts very thin slices or you may have a food processor that does this - watch your fingers!

Chop the cucumber into chunks. (You could also make the cucumber into very thin slices).

Thread the slices of carrots onto skewers, making loops of them interspersing with cherry tomatoes and cucumber.

Typical nutritional content per kebab:

26 kcal, 5g carbohydrate, 0g fat, 0g saturated fat, 0g salt

Variation - you can put other vegetables or a selection of fruits on skewers or slice up the vegetables and eat with a dipping sauce. Try experimenting.

Teriyaki kebabs (Portions - 12 kebabs)

450g/1lb lean sirloin or rump steak cut into long strips.

For the marinade:

60ml/4tbsp light soy sauce

15ml/1tbsp. sesame oil

15ml/1tbsp orange juice

1 x 2.5cm/1 inch piece fresh root ginger, peeled and grated

1 garlic clove peeled and crushed (optional)

For the dipping sauce:

100ml/ 3 ½floz prepared plum or sweet chilli sauce, plus 1tsp sesame seeds.

Method

Mix all the marinade ingredients together in a small bowl and set aside.

Thread the beef strips onto 12 metal or wooden skewers (previously soaked in water if wooden ones).

Place in a shallow dish and pour over the marinade mixture. Cover and marinate in the refrigerator for up to 1 hour.

Cook the skewers under a preheated moderate grill according to your preference, turning

occasionally. Normally 6 minutes per side for well done.

Make up the dipping sauce and drizzle over the cooked kebabs or put in a bowl for dipping.

Typical nutritional content per kebab:

These kebabs are mainly protein – really tasty and not high in fat. They are around the same calories as many chocolates but much more filling.

62 kcal, 1g carbohydrate, 2g fat, 0.7g saturated fat, 0.1g salt

Variation - intersperse the beef with vegetables or even use pieces of cooked chicken or the leftover turkey

Hot and tasty potatoes (Portions—12 depending on the size of the potatoes)

450g of salad potatoes or baby potatoes cut into wedges

Chopped thyme and parsley or any other herbs you fancy.

Typical nutritional content per kebab:

10ml light soya sauce

10ml sesame oil

Method

Put all the ingredients into a plastic bag, shake well.

Place potatoes on a baking tray, lightly oiled or onto grease proof paper and bake at the top of a hot oven.

Typical nutritional content per portion:

35 kcal, 6g carbohydrate, 1g fat, 0.2g saturated fat, 0g salt

Nutty Nibbles (Portions 20)

100g/4oz almonds

100g/4oz plain popped corn

1 tsp sesame seeds

1 tbsp honey

1 tbsp sweet chilli

1 tsp sesame oil

Method

Mix the seeds, honey and sweet chilli.

Put the oil in a non-stick pan, add the nuts and corn.

Add the seeds, honey and sweet chilli mixture.

Lightly cook – tossing so the corn and nuts are coated.

Place in a dish and serve warm.

Typical nutritional content per portion:

69 kcal, 4g carbohydrate, 5g fat, 0.5g saturated fat, 0g salt

Variation - pop corn is fabulous as a snack and it is so easy to make in a pan or popcorn maker, lovely warm and perhaps flavoured with a drop of vanilla essence or grated parmesan. It makes a good alternative to crisps and other savoury snacks.

Cucumber pockets (12 portions)

1 large cucumber – choose a straight one.

50g/2oz low fat Philadelphia or other low fat soft cheese.

Paprika about half a teaspoon

Method

Cut the cucumber into 12 pieces.

Hollow out a small piece on one side and fill with the cheese.

Sprinkle with paprika.

Typical nutritional content per pocket:

These look really pretty and are virtually carbohydrate free as well as less calories. I saw the idea in Philadelphia and adapted it.

11 kcal, 1g carbohydrate, 0g fat, 0g saturated fat, 0g salt

Variation - fillings like humous or pate can be used as an alternative.

Mabel's Mincemeat

– this will not keep but then it is so delicious – who would want it to!

75g/3oz raisins

50g/2oz sultanas

50g/2oz currants

150g/6oz chopped eating apple or use a cooking apple for a sharper flavour

half a tsp mixed spice-optional

100ml cider or apple juice

Method

Soak the dried fruit in the cider or apple juice – cover it for a couple of hours in the fridge.

Gently cook the chopped apple in a little water until soft.

Combine the dried fruit mix and apple. Add the spices.

Typical nutritional content per 30g portion (one heaped tablespoon):

41 kcal, 9g carbohydrate, 0g fat, 0g saturated fat, 0g salt

Variation - try putting the mincemeat into filo pastry, fold over and bake - you may need to use 2 sheets. They make a very pretty alternative to ordinary mince pies. It is also nice with vanilla ice cream especially if warmed and drizzled over the top. Other dried fruit like cranberries can be used or even chopped up figs.

Cheats version

Add the apple, cooked in water, with the cider or apple juice and spices. (optional). Add this to a bought mincemeat or even lift the top off the cheap and cheerful mince pies and put in a little of the mixture!

Christmas pudding

By Dr Mabel Blades, Consultant Dietician



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.

Ideas for Christmas leftovers

By Dr Mabel Blades, Consultant Dietician

Christmas is a time when many people buy too much food, often then eat too much, and also end up throwing food away. For environmental considerations and to save money, here are some ideas for using up some of the Christmas fare. If you cannot face doing this straight after Christmas, then freeze the leftover items and use them later.

Note: I have not included the nutritional content, as it may vary quite a bit.

Christmas pudding leftovers – serves 4

This is delicious but Christmas puddings are high in calories so if you can limit everyone to single helpings you should have some left for this treat. It should give some ideas for using up the pudding.

50-100g of leftover Christmas pudding

1 teaspoon oil

4 pots plain yoghurt or 4 scoops plain ice cream

1 tbsp chopped nuts or cranberry sauce or dried fruit, such as chopped dates

Method

Break up the pudding into crumbs. Put the oil in a heavy non-stick pan, add the crumbs and cook until crispy. You can omit this step if you want. Put the yoghurt or ice cream into dishes. Add the pudding to the yogurt and then top with chopped nuts, cranberry or dried fruit.

Turkey leftovers – serves 4

300 g cold, cooked turkey meat, cubed

50g low fat mayonnaise

Half a teaspoon of curry paste (use less or more to taste)

2 sticks celery chopped

Half a small red and half a small green pepper de-seeded and chopped

Method

Toss all of the ingredients together and serve on lettuce. If you do not have much turkey left add extra vegetables and even a little cooked rice or pasta.

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 alcohol 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!

InDependent Diabetes Trust

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