

# AMERICAN DIABETES MONTH®



## HOLIDAY SURVIVAL GUIDE

### Celebrations

Parties can pose a challenge for people with diabetes. Celebrations like birthdays, anniversaries, and the holidays present a minefield of situations to navigate. Without a little preplanning, you risk throwing your diabetes off course and sending a joyous occasion into a healthcare calamity.

Discuss individual approaches for holidays and spiritual practice beliefs with your diabetes healthcare team (especially when it comes to using alcohol, if at all — moderation and with food). Please keep your glucose monitor handy and check it periodically with any event as that's the only way to know if you are safe or headed for trouble. Some common celebrations and approaches to each are listed below.

### Birthdays

If cake is important, please have some. You can exercise earlier in the day or after the dessert, moderate the carbs for your meal, or get a plan together for extra diabetes medication if needed. It's a special event, and you shouldn't be punished or deprive yourself for having diabetes. You can also try an activity that doesn't involve food (shopping, going to the movies, the theater, playing games, etc.).

### Holidays

- **New Years:** You may need less basal evening insulin should you have champagne on December 31. This would help to stave off starting the New Year with hypoglycemia. Carry emergency glucose tablets and a protein bar. You might try a small snack before arriving to the party to avoid an all night graze.
- **Eid al-Adha** (the Festival of Sacrifice and the most important feast honored by Muslims worldwide, 70 days after Ramadan): It commemorates Prophet Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son Ishmal for Allah. It concludes with millions of Muslims taking the pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. When sharing two-thirds of your meals with the poor, you will need less insulin and medication due to limited food intake. Consider limiting koftas.
- **Chinese New Year:** End of January-mid-February (date varies). Traditions require people to practice various customs to promote prosperity (like sharing tangerines and oranges to symbolize abundant happiness) and ward off bad spirits (such as lighting firecrackers and wearing the color red). It's a week-long celebration, filled with all kinds of carbs. Notable mention goes to a togetherness-candy tray. Pace yourself and share money-filled red envelopes ("lay see").
- **Easter:** If you're fasting for church service, you may need to reduce or hold your morning diabetes medications (check with your healthcare provider first) and pass on the chocolate bunny ears.

- **Ramadan** (Islamic month of fasting, dates change about 13 days earlier in each consecutive year): People with diabetes are not required or advised to fast. If you wish to follow tradition, get an individualized plan together with your healthcare provider to accommodate the pre-dawn to sunset fast to prevent hypo or hyperglycemia, and dehydration.
- **Thanksgiving**: Bring a healthy choice to share, have a little of everything instead of a lot, build exercise into the day, and ask about the best medicine approach to take.
- **Bodhi Day** (Buddah's Enlightenment, oftentimes observed 12/8): Choose a small portion of rice and milk, count your carbs and act accordingly. Consider adding a protein. If meditating for hours, you may need less medicine and a way to prevent dehydration.
- **Virgin of Guadalupe** (honors the patron saint of Mexico / patroness of the Americas 12/12): Adjust medicines to handle the several hours of morning fast followed by high carb content foods (champurrado — a hot, thick, chocolate milk with corn flour added, tamales and sweet bread). You may need less evening insulin, or to hold your morning medications until you have food, and extra quick-acting insulin to cover the extra carbs. Bring quick acting sugar if you start to feel dizzy or low.
- **Hanukkah** (sometimes spelled Chanukah, the Jewish festival of lights, occurring anytime between late November and late December): Enjoy the stuffed beef brisket or fowl, try baking the potato latkes instead of frying in oil or substitute with other winter vegetables. Try whole wheat challah bread instead of egg-enriched yeast and limit the honey-sweetened desserts. Plan for extra walking or extra medications to combat the extra carbs.
- **Christmas** (12/25): Bring quick acting sugar with you to church (whether it be midnight or early mass) as lows can occur in the middle of a sermon. Suggest non-food related gifts. You can also accept all neighborly gifts of baked goods to share with your friends and family. Have a snack if the main meal feast is delayed. You may need more bolus insulin to account for the big meal. Ask for a donation to be made towards diabetes research in lieu of giving you a gift.
- **Boxing Day** (also known as St. Stephen's Day, 12/26): Go easy on the buffet line. Fish around for the dime in the plum pudding and limit the cream. Other tips about alcohol and exercise apply here!
- **Kwanzaa** (African American / Pan-African celebration, 12/26-1/1): Have the karamu (yams, sesame seeds, collard greens and hot peppers) early in the evening if you also plan to celebrate New Year's Eve. Factor candied yams into bolus insulin dose. Watch alcohol intake in the passing of a communal unity cup.

No matter what the occasion, a little diabetes preplanning goes a long way to ensure diabetes won't interfere with the experience.

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NOVEMBER 2010**