Dining with Diabetes: Holiday meals create challenges

Eating plans for diabetics can be good for whole family

By Pat Melgares, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. – For people with diabetes, the holiday onslaught of high sugar, high carbohydrate foods could feel like a demolition derby of sorts for their diet.

But instead of feeling like they’re taking a hit from all sides of the party table, Christina Holmes said people with diabetes – or at risk for the disease – can benefit from common-sense strategies to navigate holiday meals.

“We don’t want diabetes to be something that is isolating people, or making them not feel included,” said Holmes, a family and consumer sciences specialist in K-State Research and Extension’s southwest regional office in Parsons.

“We know that there’s going to be celebrations and get-togethers and parties. We want participants to know they can still attend those things but also keep their blood sugar under control.”

Holmes is coordinator of the statewide Dining with Diabetes program, a series of four classes that includes learning, demonstrations, physical activity and tasting healthy foods. She said the program’s focus is to help individual’s learn strategies to lessen the health risks of diabetes, which affects more than 1 in 10 Kansas adults (11%).

Her advice for the holidays includes:

- Eat a small salad before going to family get-togethers to take the edge off your appetite.
- Prepare traditional recipes with more healthful ingredients.
- Focus on fewer high carbohydrate foods.

In addition, Holmes says she often encourages families to consider a diet typical of what a person with diabetes might follow.
“You don’t have to eat differently from anyone else,” Holmes said. “A diet for a diabetic is basically a healthy eating plan that everyone should follow, such as eating more fruits and vegetables and lean meats; and moderating our portion sizes.

“We don’t want diabetics to feel like they’re in an isolated group or that they are the only one’s eating this way. A balanced diet is beneficial for everyone in the family.”

Dining with Diabetes is offered in-person and online through many local extension offices in Kansas. Holmes said the program is designed for adults who have been diagnosed with Type II diabetes, pre-diabetes, as well as family members, caregivers and those who form the support system.

In addition to 11% of adult Kansans diagnosed with diabetes, there are approximately 35% Kansas adults who have been identified with pre-diabetes. Holmes said data indicates an estimated 66,000 people in Kansas may be living with diabetes – or be at high risk for the disease -- and not even know it.

According to Holmes, the cost of diabetes and pre-diabetes to Kansans for medical care and decreased productivity in the workplace is an estimated $2.6 billion.

“The more we can educate and empower individuals to improve their dietary intake and become physically active – and make changes in their behavior now – the more we will be able to prevent a diagnosis of diabetes in the future,” she said.

More information on signing up for Dining with Diabetes is available at local extension offices in Kansas, or by calling Holmes at 620-421-4826.

-30-

FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story
Dining with Diabetes, https://www.k-state.edu/diningwithdiabetes

K-State Research and Extension local offices, https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/statewide-locations.html

K-State Research and Extension is a short name for the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, a program designed to generate and distribute useful knowledge for the well-being of Kansans. Supported by county, state, federal and private funds, the program has county extension offices, experiment fields, area extension offices and regional research centers statewide. Its headquarters is on the K-State campus in Manhattan. For more information, visit www.ksre.ksu.edu. K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Source
Christina Holmes
620-421-4826
christinaholmes@ksu.edu

Story by:
Pat Melgares
785-532-1160
melgares@ksu.edu