Have yourself a happy holiday tummy!

What do you think of when it comes to the holidays? Friends and family, gathering around the table fully-loaded with succulent ham laden with brown sugar glaze, candied yams, buttery mashed potatoes smothered in rich, luscious gravy, homemade rolls dripping with butter… and a big slice of pie to top it off… ?

_Ahh... those holiday meals._

But sometimes those monstrous meals served at holiday dinners can take the “happy” out of our “happy holidays” as we lie on the couch, nursing our over-filled tummies.

Experts say this can easily be avoided if you think twice before filling your plate - and mouth - with second and third helpings of food.

**Indigestion** is mainly caused by eating too much, too soon, and eating the things that slow down the digestion process, particularly stomach emptying. Too many sweets and fats in a short period of time can lead to painful consequences!

Indigestion is a general term used to describe discomfort or burning in the upper abdomen, often accompanied by nausea, abdominal bloating or belching. Indigestion can be related to increased amounts of air and substance in a limited space, exceeding the gut’s ability to comfortably move them along.

Fats and sweets are plentiful during the holiday season, and are commonly the foods everyone wants to eat and enjoy. However, these foods slow down the stomach’s emptying process and can even lead to increased esophageal acid reflux because there is nowhere for the food to go.
Carbonated beverages tend to cause more expansion in the stomach, making a person even feel fuller and more bloated.

To avoid indigestion discomfort:
- Limit portion sizes.
- Watch intake of fatty and sugary foods, and spread them throughout the meal.
- Drink water before and during a meal to give the feeling of a full stomach and prevent overeating.
- Limit alcohol intake, which can cause acid reflux.

Do something physical between courses. Physical activity can aid in the digestion process. Get involved in that pickup football game or take a walk around the block after your meal!

Over-the-counter antacids or acid reducers may help if these tips still don’t work.

If your symptoms persist for more than a day or so, or continue, there may be a more serious problem. In that case, it’s best to seek professional medical advice.

People with cardiac conditions or risks should also keep this in mind, as studies show heart attacks can occur after the intake of a big meal.

The holidays can be great fun, but you’ll enjoy them even more if you take a few precautions and understand what makes your stomach full!
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