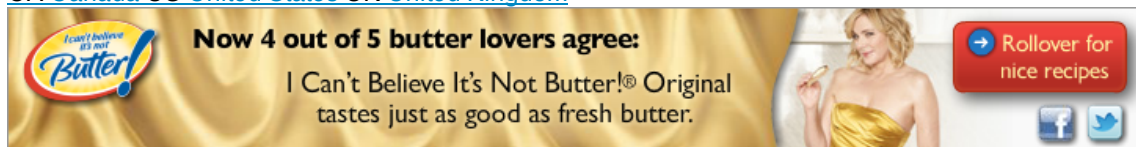


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How to Have a Healthy Holiday Season

Posted: 10/26/11 11:15 AM ET

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With Halloween and the holiday season approaching I thought it would be helpful to interview nutritionist [Elissa Brenner](#). It's especially hard to stay on track during the holiday season when temptation abounds. Elissa's advice is sensible and easy to digest.

JZ: What are your patients always surprised to learn when they see you?

EB: People think that diet food is healthy. Things like Diet Coke and 100 Calorie packs are not healthy. People are too concerned with the amount of calories and they don't look at the ingredient labels. Instead of eating a 100 Calorie pack of Oreos, you should have a whole grain or something that is healthy and not a fake chemical food.

JZ: If you are craving something sweet, what is your treat?

EB: I love soft serve fruit. It looks like frozen yogurt but it's just fruit, organic sugar and water. It's good and it's filling. You can top it with some chocolate. There is no dairy or gluten in the soft serve. I also like sorbet or a small amount of dark chocolate.

JZ: Halloween is coming up. What are some tips to keep your kids on track when they are surrounded with all this candy?

EB: As a parent the best thing to do is just to limit your child to 2 pieces of candy. Most of the time the kids just eat too much and they get a stomachache.

Gummy candies and candy corn are just pure sugar and the worst. If you are going to have something sweet you should have dark chocolate or candy apples. The candy apples at least have some nutrition. It's hard because kids just love candy.

JZ: Do you have any ideas for eating smartly at holiday parties?

EB: You should always eat before because you never know what's going to be served. You should try to avoid sauces because they usually have cream and butter. You should also avoid doughy items like pretzels.

JZ: I thought pretzels were healthy.

EB: Pretzels have no real nutrition. They are only healthier than potato chips because they aren't fried. They are just empty calories and not filling. You aren't getting any vitamins or fiber. You are better off to have celery with some almond butter.



JZ: What would you serve at a cocktail party?

EB: Raw unsalted nuts, chicken satay, lettuce wraps and crudite with salsa. I also like black bean dip with white corn tortilla chips or kale chips. I love olives and for dessert sliced fresh fruit. For cocktails it's important to drink in moderation. All mixed cocktails usually have sugar. Better to have wine than any mixed drinks. If you are going to add anything to a drink it should be coconut water. It has a ton of electrolytes and is actually good at curing hangovers. A healthy cocktail could be vodka with coconut water and a fresh fruit puree.

JZ: If you only have five minutes for breakfast what is a healthy option?

EB: Nothing is faster than a protein shake. It's filling and will hold you 'til lunch. If I have time I like to make oatmeal or eggs.

JZ: What advice do you have for eating smartly when you go out to dinner?

EB: Definitely, no breadbasket. Once you start you will end up eating the whole basket. It's better to have a glass of wine instead of the bread. Also, you shouldn't order two courses of protein. If you are going to have a chicken, steak or fish dish as your main you should have a vegetarian soup or salad to start. Restaurants cook with a lot of butter. It doesn't hurt to say go light or leave off the butter. It just adds so many unwanted calories.

JZ: What the one easy thing that people can do to become healthier?

EB: Drink more water. Most people do not drink enough water and they mistake their hunger for dehydration.

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