

# Traditions on the Table: Connecting Through Holiday Meals

Healthy Lifestyles  
• Health Hub  
December 2024





## Gather, Feast, Connect:

### Building Social Wellness Around the Holiday Table

#### The Importance of Holiday Meals: More Than Just Food

Holiday meals are about more than just satisfying hunger—they are an opportunity to come together and celebrate. Shared meals are at the heart of many festive occasions and holidays and help foster connection among family and friends. Even the act of preparing the meal ties people to their cultural heritage and creates an emotional bond with the past. Food also plays a significant role in nourishing both the body and our emotions, especially during the holiday season, when it can evoke feelings of warmth, comfort, and togetherness.

Whether it's a homemade family recipe or a beloved community dish, the act of sharing food deepens connections and promotes a sense of joy.



Codie Crosby is a new Health Educator with the Employee Wellness Program. A recent graduate from Utah State University and her experience teaching Physical Education brings new perspectives to our team!

Codie loves to get outside, to travel, and to pick up some odd talents along the way! She is passionate about wellness and finding new ways to incorporate different dimensions of health into everyday life.



## Holiday Traditions: Strengthening Social Bonds

Beyond the meal itself, holiday traditions play a special role in strengthening our connections with others. Whether it's cooking together, sharing recipes, or coming together around a festive table, these moments offer us opportunities to create lasting memories. These traditions not only bring people together in the present but also help keep those bonds alive year after year, fostering a deep sense of belonging.

Traditions are especially meaningful in fostering intergenerational connections, allowing younger family members to learn from older generations and feel a deeper connection to their roots. In this way, traditions play a vital role in preserving the fabric of family and community life, strengthening ties across time.

This year, we encourage you to strengthen social bonds by asking more questions and seeking connection to older family member or neighbors and friends.

## Incorporating Family Favorites

### Identify Signature Dishes

Ask family members to share their favorite holiday foods or recipes.



### Blend Old and New

Mix traditional dishes with new recipes to keep things exciting and fresh.



### Cook Together

Make meal prep a shared experience, inviting everyone to pitch in.



### Rotate Responsibilities

Each year, rotate who's responsible for preparing certain dishes to keep the tradition dynamic.



# Social Wellness: The Impact of Shared Meals and Traditions

During the holiday season, the act of coming together can help reduce feelings of loneliness and stress, which are often heightened during this time of year. Social connections, whether with close family or a wider community, provide emotional support. Additionally, inclusive celebrations that honor diverse cultural traditions help create a broader, more welcoming community, where everyone can feel valued and part of a larger social group. Holiday meals and traditions not only feed our bodies but also fill our emotional cups, adding to the joy felt this time of year. This year, we urge you to find ways to diversify your cultural traditions and invite new experiences into your life.



## Ways to Include Others



Invite New Faces



Share Memories and Traditions



Focus on Acts of Kindness



Create a Welcoming Environment



Reach Out to Elderly or Isolated Individuals



Celebrate Different Traditions

