

December 2008 Newsletter



Challenges of the Holiday Season

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Patients and support group attendees have been talking about the emotional challenges they face during the holidays. It is common knowledge that the holidays can be a stressful time. Even if your health is perfect, the financial stresses, family issues, social obligations, etc. can really mess with your ability to cope. But if you have IBS or food allergies, you face some special challenges.

IBS and/or food allergies can make the social activities and group meals during the holidays especially difficult, adding to an already emotionally charged environment. It can be difficult to plan and participate as one would like. Naturally, it is best to identify, recognize and deal with the issues that you will come up against. Hopefully you already know what foods to avoid in order to stay healthy, but even if you haven't been able to figure that out, there are a few things you can do to cope with holiday challenges.

First, try to plan ahead as much as possible. If you can invite people over to your house rather than go to theirs, that might make things easier. When that isn't possible, try to bring a dish that everyone will love and that you can eat too. This is doable, but it might take some practice to create. If you don't have such a dish yet or don't have time to make one, then don't stress out about it. But plan on creating one or more options like this for the future.

If you will be dining out, contact the restaurant ahead of time and explain your needs. Even ask to speak to the chef. You may be surprised at how interested the chef is in making you happy. When talking to the employees of the restaurant, just be nice and ask them if they can tell you which options are acceptable, or if there are some simple changes that can be made to a dish to make it work for you. If you're lucky, the chef might make you something special that will make you the envy of everyone else at the table. This has happened many times before.

Another idea is to tell the server exactly what you want, rather than asking what is in the food. For example, you can say that you would a steak not grilled in butter, or a potato without anything on it. Or you might ask for a dish without any soy sauce. This way you have more control over the situation.

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Consider eating before you go. Even treat yourself to some of your favorite foods that don't trigger your symptoms. Or plan on treating yourself later on. This way you won't be so hungry when you get there, and the temptation won't be as great.

If you think that you are going to give in to temptation or that you might accidentally ingest a food allergen, then consider some products that can diminish your reaction to allergenic foods. The two most effective products are called *Glutenzyme* and *Dairy Ease*. These are enzymes designed to break down gluten and dairy, respectively. They are not a substitute for avoiding your food allergen or intolerance, but they have the potential to greatly diminish your reaction to it. A more general pancreatic enzyme product may help with other foods, but isn't nearly as targeted or as effective. These products are available at the IBS Treatment Center.

As surprising as this might sound, if you don't feel up to it, it might simply be better to not go. It can be hard to miss family events and work-related social gatherings. But when your health is compromised you need to take care of numero uno, you. Remember that your health and comfort are important. This can be a tough decision to make, but sometimes it is a necessary one, and may be better in the long run for a variety of reasons, including that it might help others realize how serious you are about it. If you can, go ahead, but don't push a situation that doesn't feel right.

If you have food allergies your challenges are different. You already know what you need to avoid, but the holidays are especially difficult. You can face important meals where nothing served will be appropriate for you. Family and friends may insist that you try dishes you shouldn't. And there is always lots of food available with unknown ingredients. We discussed many of these issues in our Early December 2006 issue, <http://www.ibstreatmentcenter.com/Newsletters/EarlyDec2006.pdf>.

You may find that printing that newsletter and sharing it with the right people is helpful.

Remember that when people push you to eat things, their motive is not to make you sick. They simply don't understand how important it is that you not eat certain things. Be kind to them, but be strong. And you don't have to apologize for taking care of yourself

Prepare yourself for group events by doing 3 things: Find out what will be available; Bring alternatives or eat ahead of time when you need to; Be ready to leave early if you need to; and finally, Don't take it personally. No one understands your health the way you do.

Remember, you are not alone. Millions of people have the same problem that you do. They may not be in the same room that you are in, but they definitely exist. And if you know what food(s) triggers your problem, then you are probably way ahead of others in the room who don't yet realize that they have a food allergy or intolerance. Don't tell them unless you're sure they'll appreciate the information. It's our little secret.

Have a healthy and happy holiday season.

Regular Features

Gifts of Nature: Montana Flour Mix

We discovered a new product at the IBS support group meeting. It is called Montana All Purpose Flour Blend made by Gifts of Nature. When we researched the Gifts of Nature website we found an incredible array of

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“Rootin’ Tootin’ We Ain’t Gluten!” products and recipes! Please check out the website <http://www.giftsofnature.net> to find numerous flour, muffin, biscuit, baking, cornbread, waffle, cookie, cake, bread, roll and pizza crust mixes. Some of their mixes may be successfully prepared with egg substitutes and some mixes are corn free.

The Montina All Purpose Flour is made up of a blend of Indian Ricegrass, high in fiber, protein and iron, rice flour and tapioca. The Indian Rice grass imparts a sweet nutty flavor. If you already have a flour blend you like you can use the Montina Pure Baking Supplement to add to the nutritional value of your flour mixture. Just add 15 percent of it to your total flour mixture. The Montina All Purpose Flour is good for bread, gravies, stews and many baked goods. If you choose to try some Gifts of Nature products let us know if you like them.



Announcements



The Innate Health Foundation Wiki

Website: *Good News / Bad News*

First - *The Good News!*

Users have added a number of new restaurants that offer great food and respect food allergies to the IHFWiki. And several users have added other info, including reviews and products.

Check it out at <http://www.InnateHealthFoundation.org/wiki/> This site has

all sorts of information for those with food allergies or intolerances including restaurants, recipes, food products, etc. If you have tips to share with the rest of us, please register and add your helpful info to the site. To get registered, send an email request (including your preferred username) to contact@innatehealthfoundation.org

Then - *The Bad News!*

It is a sad fact of the internet that if you let everyone have access, some people will try to take advantage. The IHFWiki has recently had a number of spam attacks. Fortunately all the bogus information has been deleted and the spammers have been blocked. But as a result the decision was made to require an email request to enable users to add content. You can still view and read without logging in. But if you don't have an account now and you want to add content, you will need to email contact@innatehealthfoundation.org and include your preferred username. If you have any questions, just email contact@innatehealthfoundation.org.

Support Group Meeting

The IBS Treatment Center hosts a support group, open to the public usually on the first Tuesday of every month. The Next Meeting is on Tuesday, January 6th from 6:30-7:45PM.

Beverly Kindblade, MS, RD, CD will be speaking at the January Support Group meeting. Ms. Kindblade will speak about understanding nutritional deficiencies, inflammation, and IBS. Her website is: <http://www.seattlenutrition.com/>.

Location: IBS Treatment Center, 1229 Madison St. Suite 1220, Seattle, WA 98104

Phone: 206-264-1111 View driving directions

Thanks to all those who attended the cookie exchange in December. We all enjoyed some very tasty cookies!