

## Talking Turkey

You've probably heard that eating turkey makes you sleepy because it contains tryptophan. While it is true that turkey does contain tryptophan and tryptophan is involved in some processes in the body related to sleep, it is probably not the main reason that you feel sleepy after a big Thanksgiving turkey dinner. Tryptophan is an amino acid that is found in many foods and turkey doesn't contain that much more tryptophan than other foods that we normally eat without dozing off, like chicken, pork and beef. The more likely culprit in the sleepy feeling after Thanksgiving dinner is a full stomach. Most people tend to go a little overboard on Thanksgiving when it comes to preparing and eating dinner. On any typical day, most families will have an entrée, a starch and a vegetable for dinner that occasionally finishes with a dessert. On Thanksgiving on the other hand, it isn't unusual to see two or three entrees, four or five side dishes, multiple desserts and lots of snacking before and after. What do all of these food options lead to? Eating way more than we normally would. With all of this extra food in our stomachs, our bodies must divert energy to digesting, leaving little energy to do much else. At this point, tryptophan really isn't an issue. This year, instead of stuffing yourself to sleep, try a healthier take on Thanksgiving with these tips:

- ▶ Take a small taste of each dish instead of a full serving.
- ▶ Focus on veggies. Vegetables are packed with vitamins and fiber to keep you satisfied without overloading you on calories.
- ▶ Watch the condiments. Butter, gravy and dressing will add lots of extra calories. Use them in small amounts.
- ▶ Think before you drink. Many holiday beverages are jam packed with calories. Try low cal options like water and unsweetened tea.
- ▶ Take it slow. Many of us eat faster than it takes our bodies to realize we are full. Take a break in between servings. If you are still hungry after 20 minutes, then go back for seconds.

### TURKEY TIDBITS

- ▶ Turkeys were one of the first animals in the Americas to be domesticated.
- ▶ Turkeys are first documented over two thousand years ago in Central America and Mexico.
- ▶ Benjamin Franklin called the turkey "a true original native of America."
- ▶ The turkey was nominated to be the official bird of the United States but eventually lost out to the bald eagle.
- ▶ Domesticated turkeys cannot fly.
- ▶ Male turkeys are called "toms" and female turkeys are "hens."



*Happy Thanksgiving!*