

News Column

By: Cassidy Lutz

K-State Research and Extension Greenwood County

Family and Community Wellness Agent

Sleepy After Your Thanksgiving Feast?

Ah, Thanksgiving is almost here. This week many of us will feast on delicious holiday foods, including turkey. But have you ever felt that immediate need to take a nap once your belly is full? You might think it was because of all that turkey, but is this food item really the culprit?

Turkey contains tryptophan, an amino acid that the body uses to make Vitamin B3 and serotonin, a hormone that makes you relax and yes – makes you sleepy. But turkey actually has less when compared to chicken. There is also a list of other foods that deliver a hefty dose of amino acids including fish, nuts, and beans.

Many of our Thanksgiving dinners include stuffing, gravy, cranberry sauce, potatoes, green bean casserole, and not to mention all the different offerings of desserts. Many of these foods are high in refined carbohydrates. When we consume them, it causes insulin levels to dip which can also contribute to that tired feeling. If we're filling our plate to the brim with carbs, that drowsy feeling only increases as the blood rushes to our digestive system. At that point breaking down the food in our system takes away from the energy needed to stay awake and alert.

Beyond the tryptophan, the influx of carbs, and the sheer amount of food we eat, other factors can contribute to post-meal sleepiness. While Thanksgiving Day and its preparation can be something we look forward to, it can also be stressful. Drinking a lot of alcohol with your meal or throughout the day as we watch football games can also add to the exhaustion.

Although the post-feast snooze may be part of your Thanksgiving tradition, it's also not fun to feel overstuffed and too tired to enjoy the rest of the day. If you'd like to avoid feeling exhausted after the big meal, here are some ideas:

- Eat small, healthy meals during the day. Don't make the main meal your first or you'll be sure to overindulge.
- Put smaller portions on your plate. You can always go back for more.
- Eat slowly and take breaks to gauge how full you really are. This gives your brain time to receive the message from your stomach that you're full.
- Stop eating once you're full. I know, easier said than done but there will surely be leftovers to munch on and enjoy into the next day.
- After the meal, take a walk outside to help your meal digest.

Now that you know your post-Thanksgiving tiredness isn't entirely the turkey's fault, consider some small ways you cut back and still enjoy the food and the day.

For more information about Family and Community Wellness, 4-H Youth Development, or K-State Research and Extension, contact the office at 620-583-7455, or email me at celutz@ksu.edu, or stop by

the office. Visit the K-State Research and Extension - Greenwood County Facebook page and <http://www.greenwood.k-state.edu/> for more information.