Surviving the Holidays and all of that eating

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It’s hard to stick to a special diet

- HPN and HEN consumers are often prescribed a special diet that restricts normal foods.
- Compliance is a challenge.
- Life is centered around food and this is even more apparent during celebrations and holidays.
Food is not always our friend!

- Evoke anxiety for HPN and HEN consumers
- Eating can lead to pain, discomfort, or urgent restroom visits
- Not eating can spark numerous questions
Overview

- Emotional impact of dietary restrictions
- Complications with disclosing dietary restrictions, illness, and/or disabilities
- Helpful tips to navigate eating challenges
Factors associated with dietary compliance

- Hunger vs. cravings
- Eating at home vs. away from home
- Social or peer pressure
I want to be normal

- Interviews conducted with 24 adults with short bowel syndrome
- Quality of life was evaluated
- Lifestyle was affected by health, stamina, diarrhea, having an ostomy, and infusion schedule
- Strong desire to achieve normalcy in life

Winkler MF. *J Parenter Enteral Nutr.* 2010;34:395-407
I want to eat so bad, I could almost cry
I want to eat so bad, I could almost cry!

- Eat or infuse nutrition prior to the party to combat true hunger
- Offer to help with the cooking
- Bring your own “safe” food or drink
I want to eat cake like the other kids, but I don’t want my belly to hurt.
Disclosing food issues can lead to a stigma

- In 2006, Sabrina’s Law mandates disclosure of severe food allergies for school age children
- A 2008 study conducted interviews with 20 children and their parents
- Children were stigmatized as a result of the law
- Conflict between physical safety and social well-being

Dean J. Health Soc Care Community. May 4, 2015 [Epub ahead of print]
I want to eat cake like the other kids, but I don’t want my belly to hurt

- Be prepared – talk to children about what may happen if they eat the cake

- Pack “safe” foods

- Communicate special nutritional needs with someone that is going to be at the party
Some situations are unavoidable

- Business lunch
- Job interview meal
- Conference activities
I will put some food on my plate and move it around a bit and hopefully no one will notice I’m not eating…
Successful employment with disabilities

- Individuals with disabilities face barriers to employment
- Investigators interviewed 41 people competitively employed for at least 5 years and discussed disabilities
- Disclosure and discussion decisions were influenced by the disability
- People with disabilities must work harder than others to get a job

I will put some food on my plate and move it around a bit and hopefully no one will notice I’m not eating…

- Decide how much or little you want to disclose and to whom

- Communicate to someone

- Have a wingman to help take the pressure off
Avoiding conventional eating should not make you avoid friends

- Social withdraw is a typical reaction when working through new eating restrictions
- Avoiding social food interactions may make you feel worse about your situation
Liz has been holding that cup, but hasn’t taken a drink yet. I wonder if she is okay?

If I just hold this coffee cup, maybe no one will notice I’m not drinking.
To tell or not to tell

- Be honest
  - Eliminate assumptions
  - Communicate what makes you comfortable

- True friends will care about your wellbeing and will be supportive and want to help

- Avoid unnecessary drama
Dating with eating challenges

- First dates can be stressful even without food challenges
- Have a game plan
- Be prepared
I hope there isn't a line for the restroom.
I hope there isn’t a line for the restroom

- Know your environment
- Pick a restaurant or coffee shop that is familiar
- Choose a “safe” food
- Decide before meeting how much you want to disclose
Food gifts

- Food is often given as a gift to show gratitude or appreciation to someone.
- Not eating a food gift can be seen as disrespectful or ungrateful.
Ummm, Thank you?
Food gifts

- Be grateful
- Do not be offended that someone was not considerate of your relationship with food
- Remember that your situation is not the norm and it is very difficult for others to comprehend
Your true friends and family will accept you and your eating challenges

- Be honest
- Avoid unnecessary drama
It is so nice to enjoy a meal with my family and not be judged for what I do and don’t eat.
It is so nice to enjoy a meal with my family and not be judged for what I do and don’t eat.

- Find friends and family that you can enjoy their company without the worries of food
- Enjoy activities that do not involve eating
- Start incorporating non-food traditions into your holiday and celebratory functions
Stick to your safe foods
Be prepared for the worst
Discussion

Questions from the audience!

For more information: