

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – October 31, 2002

**HIGHLIGHTS:**

Rich, sugary holiday foods offer a special challenge for people with diabetes. The Director of the Comprehensive Diabetes Outpatient Program at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center offers tips that help people with diabetes make healthful choices during the holidays.

**AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS:**

- Dr. Riccardo Perfetti, Director, Outpatient Diabetes and Weight Management programs at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center
- Cindy Wong, Registered Dietitian, Outpatient Diabetes and Weight Management Program, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center

**DIABETES AND HOLIDAY FOODS: CEDARS-SINAI PHYSICIAN OFFERS TIPS TO MAINTAIN A HEALTHY HOLIDAY BALANCE**

LOS ANGELES (Oct 31, 2002) - Holiday celebrations offer temptation for partygoers to abandon healthy nutrition habits, but calorie-laden festivities pose a special challenge to the 16 million Americans who have diabetes. "The key to successfully navigating the holiday season," says Riccardo Perfetti, M.D., Director of the Endocrine Training Program and of the Outpatient Diabetes and Weight Management programs at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, "is to remember that even though you can take a holiday, your diabetes never does. We can teach patients how to enjoy the holidays and keep diabetes under control."

Diabetes, the sixth leading cause of death by disease in the United States, is a metabolic disorder in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin. Insulin is a hormone needed to convert sugar into energy needed to carry out the activities of life. During the holidays, people with diabetes should avoid an overabundance of sugary desserts and rich foods and follow a regular exercise routine, says Dr. Perfetti, who leads the medical center's nationally-acclaimed diabetes outpatient program.

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle during the holidays can have a positive influence on your blood sugar and health. "People with diabetes can enjoy the wonderful foods of the holiday season--only in moderation. Regular exercise and sensible daily planning should be especially important during the next few weeks," Dr. Perfetti says.

Dr. Perfetti offers the following tips to help people with diabetes enjoy a healthful holiday season:

- Follow a regular exercise routine to help regulate metabolism. If time is tight, try taking 10- or 15-minute brisk walks at intervals throughout the day. Remember, after a holiday meal, to wait 60 to 90 minutes before taking your walk.
- Keep your blood sugar as close to normal as possible and take your diabetes medicine regularly. Watch for symptoms of low and high blood sugar.
- “Know when enough is enough.” Practice portion control. If you control the portion sizes of the food you eat, you will be able to eat a wider variety of foods including your favorites. A small portion is less likely to upset blood sugar levels.
- Do a “trade-off.” Eating more during the holidays can be – in part – offset by a moderate and daily increase in physical exercise.
- Choose nonfat or low fat foods. A healthy diet includes less than 30% of calories from fat, with less than 10% of these from saturated fat. Monounsaturated fats found in almonds, walnuts, canola and olive oil are the healthiest for your body.
- At parties and other social events, gravitate toward the veggies and fresh fruit.
- Take extra care to be certain that your meals are nutritious, varied and balanced. If you do have a treat, make sure you substitute it for an equivalent item in your regular menu.
- Be positive. Remember that you control your diabetes; it doesn’t control you.

According to Dr. Perfetti, several thousand people in America develop diabetes every day, but an estimated one-half of those affected by the disease go undiagnosed for several years. Symptoms of diabetes include extreme thirst, frequent urination and blurry vision from time to time. Early symptoms of the disease include unexplained weight loss or weight gain, as well as fatigue. For more information, please call 310-423-3870.

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