

# HEALTH CONNECTION



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YOUR COMMUNITY CONNECTION FOR BETTER HEALTH

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## HAPPY HEALTHY HOLIDAY!

Holiday music has been ringing through the malls for weeks, fueling expectations of picture-perfect gatherings and glittering gift exchanges. But before we know it, our “Hallmark” visions can turn into stress-induced shopping trips, blown budgets, dietary derailments and forced family fun.

As wonderful as the holidays can be, they certainly bring about stress, anxiety and depression for some people. According to the National Alliance for Mental Illness, 3 in 5 Americans feel like their mental health is negatively impacted by the holidays. So before plowing head-first into December, take a moment to consider these holiday tips.

## TIPS FROM YOUR HOSPITAL

As the days get shorter and we're out and about more in the darkness, we offer these safety tips.

- Park your car in well-lit areas.
- Keep your car doors locked and unlock them only when you are ready to get out. Note your surroundings as you leave and approach your car.
- Avoid ATM runs after dark.
- Keep an extra cell phone charger handy.
- Check your tires and oil to be sure your car is in good shape.
- Fill up your gas tank during daylight hours.
- Place shopping bags out of sight.
- Let loved ones know where you're going and when you'll return.

## COPING STRATEGIES FOR THE HOLIDAYS

**BE REALISTIC** You don't have to go overboard for the holidays. Start by prioritizing what's important to you and your family, then just let the rest go.

**TAKE SHORTCUTS** Not everything has to be homemade or perfectly decorated. Look for shortcuts like purchasing prepared foods and choosing gift bags.

**MINIMIZE ALCOHOL** Many gatherings come with alcohol, which adds calories and amplifies negative feelings. Non-alcoholic options are perfectly acceptable and often preferred.

**SET BOUNDARIES** The holiday table is often the place where differing opinions arise, sometimes loudly! If this is a concern, communicate your boundaries in advance.

**AVOID DEBT** If gifts aren't in your budget, replace them with acts of service like babysitting for a family member or helping a neighbor with yard work. They'll appreciate the hand and you may get some exercise.

**ACKNOWLEDGE LOSSES** This time of year can be difficult when you've lost someone. Take time to acknowledge your feelings and reach out for extra support.

## COVID-19 DOESN'T TAKE A HOLIDAY

While many people go about their daily lives like COVID-19 is a thing of the past, it's important to remember it's still here. This is especially true when people gather in groups.

If you're hesitant about getting the vaccine or booster for yourself, remember it's up to all of us to protect those most vulnerable like children, people who cannot have the vaccine or booster for health reasons, and the elderly.

### COVID-19 Checklist

- ✔ Get Your COVID-19 vaccine or booster at least 2 weeks before participating in group activities.
- ✔ Keep home COVID-19 test kits on hand to test yourself and others before spending time with those outside of your daily circle.
- ✔ Always wear a mask when you're in crowds or tight spaces (shopping malls, airplanes, movie theaters etc.)
- ✔ If it's not too cold, look for options to gather outside like in dining areas with outdoor heaters.
- ✔ If you've had COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone who has a confirmed case, check with your healthcare provider for the latest isolation period recommendation, which is generally 5 days.
- ✔ **And don't forget to get a flu shot!**

## GET READY FOR SENIORS

If an elderly friend or family member will be visiting your home, take a few minutes to ensure their safety. Start by removing scatter rugs that are easy to trip on, especially those around doors and stairways. Clear pathways throughout your home since they may not see objects on the floor like magazine baskets and decorative statues. Make sure they have a comfortable, stable chair that's easy for them to get in and out of. And double check that necessary items in your bathroom like toilet paper and hand towels are easy to find. These quick adjustments can drastically improve their safety and everyone's comfort.



## HEALTHY HOLIDAY FOOD SUBSTITUTIONS

So many holiday gatherings are focused on food, but there are ways to lighten your favorite recipes. When planning meals, try these healthy substitutions.



Swap two egg whites for each egg needed to reduce the cholesterol.



Try low-fat milk and cheese instead of the full-fat varieties to cut calories and fat.



Substitute applesauce for half the oil when baking to minimize calories.



Use fresh or dried herbs in place of salt for healthy blood pressure.



Substitute fat-free yogurt instead of sour cream to reduce calories and saturated fat.

**With just a little planning and a lot of letting go, you can have a safe and happy holiday. But remember to reach out to your healthcare provider if you're feeling overwhelmed, unusually stressed or even depressed. Many of these feelings can be medically managed.**

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