

bodyMIND

Your Monthly Guide to Good Health

The holidays can be a time of great joy, celebration, and togetherness with family and friends. However, for many people, the holidays prove to be a time of additional responsibilities, increased stress, heightened emotions, and departure from a healthy lifestyle. During this hectic season, it is vital to take steps to impact physical, mental, and emotional health in positive ways.

Avoid Holiday Weight Gain-Many people consider the holidays to be an excuse to indulge in foods that are high in fat and calories. Be mindful of what and how much you consume at meals and parties. Use a small plate, choose small portions, and opt for low-fat foods, such as fruit and vegetable dishes. Drink water rather than soda, alcoholic drinks, or eggnog.

Host with Healthy Food-If you are hosting a holiday event, serve fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain breads, and lean meats, and avoid preparing food using mayonnaise, butter, and oils that are high in fat.

Manage Stress-Attempt to recognize triggers of stress, such as increased demands on your schedule and finances. In some cases, simply anticipating triggers and taking action to manage holiday stress can help to minimize or eliminate unpleasant symptoms.

Prevent Financial Pressure-Create a budget to avoid overspending. Consider initiating a family gift exchange, and participate in free holiday activities such as community concerts or viewing holiday decorations.

Cope with Holiday Blues-Loneliness, absence of loved ones, and conflicts within families are frequently magnified by expectations. Try to keep expectations realistic, seek out loving friends and family members, and acknowledge feelings of grief or sadness.

Maintain Healthy Habits-Engage in regular physical activity, which can burn calories and reduce symptoms of stress. Get plenty of rest, and refrain from drinking alcohol in excess.

Take Time for Yourself-Amid the socializing, shopping, hosting, and cooking, take time to participate in activities that you find enjoyable or relaxing such as reading or listening to music.

Prevent Accidents & Injuries-Unfortunately, many household accidents occur this time of year. To help prevent them, make sure that smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors are installed and working properly; never leave a candle, fireplace, or stove unattended; and do not stand on furniture to hang decorations.

If feelings of stress or depression persist beyond the holiday season, consult your primary care physician or a mental health professional.



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CAN'T SHAKE THE HOLIDAY BLUES?

Many people find themselves unusually depressed during the fall and winter months. Is it holiday stress? Often the answer is yes. However, if feelings of depression persist through January and February, it may be a case of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)—a mood disorder characterized by feelings of depression during the winter months when there is less daylight. Unlike clinical depression, symptoms of SAD subside during the spring and summer months.

For more information, call Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital Dallas at 1-877-THR-WELL or visit our web site at TexasHealth.org/BehavioralHealth

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