

Happy, Healthy Holidays



December 2023

Non-Metro Area Agency on Aging



The holidays are a time for family, friends and fun! Staying healthy can be challenging during this time of year as our routines change and our lives become busier. However, the holidays do not have to be stressful. Here are some steps to help keep you and your loved ones healthy and safe:



Healthy Traditions

Keep your holiday food traditions, but make small changes and smart substitutions where you can.

- Instead of butter, use a healthier vegetable oil or substitute equal parts unsweetened applesauce when baking.
- Use a lower-calorie sugar substitute.
- Use low-fat or nonfat milk instead of whole milk or heavy cream.
- Instead of only white flour, use half white flour and half whole-wheat flour.
- Instead of adding chocolate chips or candies, use dried fruit, like cranberries or cherries.
- Use extracts like vanilla, almond, or peppermint to add flavor instead of sugar and butter.
- Use vegetable oils or soft margarine instead of butter.
- Use whole-grain bread, rice and pasta instead of white.
- Bake, grill, or steam vegetables instead of frying.
- Compare labels of your holiday ingredients, and choose products with lower amounts of sodium and added sugars.
- Use spices, fresh herbs and citrus juice to flavor foods and drinks instead of excess salt and added sugar.



Stay Safe!

1. **Wash hands often to help prevent the spread of germs.** It's flu season. Wash your hands with soap and clean running water for at least 20 seconds.
2. **Bundle up to stay dry and warm.** Wear appropriate outdoor clothing: light, warm layers, gloves, hats, scarves, and waterproof boots.
3. **Manage stress.** Give yourself a break if you feel stressed out, overwhelmed, and out of control. Some of the best ways to manage stress are to find support, connect socially, and get plenty of sleep.
4. **Don't drink and drive or let others drink and drive.** Whenever anyone drives drunk, they put everyone on the road in danger. Choose not to drink and drive and help others do the same.
5. **Be smoke-free.** Avoid smoking and secondhand smoke. Smokers have greater health risks because of their tobacco use, but nonsmokers also are at risk when exposed to tobacco smoke.
6. **Fasten seat belts while driving or riding in a motor vehicle.** Always buckle children in the car using a child safety seat, booster seat, or seat belt according to their height, weight, and age. Buckle up every time, no matter how short the trip and encourage passengers to do the same.
7. **Get exams and screenings.** Ask your health care provider what exams you need and when to get them. Update your personal and family history.
8. **Get your vaccinations.** Vaccinations help prevent diseases and save lives. Everyone 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine each year.
9. **Monitor children.** Keep potentially dangerous toys, food, drinks, household items, and other objects out of children's reach. Protect them from drowning, burns, falls, and other potential accidents.
10. **Practice fire safety.** Most residential fires occur during the winter months, so don't leave fireplaces, space heaters, food cooking on stoves, or candles unattended. Have an emergency plan and practice it regularly.
11. **Prepare food safely.** Remember these simple steps: Wash hands and surfaces often, avoid cross-contamination, cook foods to proper temperatures and refrigerate foods promptly.
12. **Eat healthy, stay active.** Eat fruits and vegetables which pack nutrients and help lower the risk for certain diseases. Limit your portion sizes and foods high in fat, salt, and sugar. Also, be active for at least 2½ hours a week. Help kids and teens be active for at least 1 hour a day.

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/features/holidayseason/index.html>



Keep Moving!

As our daily routines change through the holiday season, sometimes physical activity becomes lower on our priority list. It is important to keep moving during this busy time to help reduce stress and burn those extra calories. Regular exercise has a number of health benefits such as improving bone and muscle strength, supporting brain function, and improving balance and flexibility.

Fun ideas:

- A family walk in the neighborhood which includes a scavenger hunt.
- Start a new tradition of an annual game of basketball, touch football, or whatever game your family/friends like to play. Be creative!

Wishing you a very Happy & Healthy Holiday season!