

Lubbock County Family Network



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EXPERT: SAFETY SHOULD TOP EVERYONE'S CHRISTMAS LIST

While the only image of fire many people have during Christmas is chestnuts roasting over an open one, fire is among the very real dangers associated with the Yuletide season, said a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service expert.

Nancy Granovsky, AgriLife Extension family economics specialist, said Christmas tree and candle fires, decorating-related accidents and unsafe toys are among the possible dangers people need to be aware of during the holidays.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, the top three days of the year for home candle fires in the U.S. are Christmas Eve, Christmas and New Year's Day," Granovsky said. "And although Christmas tree fires are not very common, they are more likely to do serious damage or result in a death than other home structure fires."

More than half of home candle fires occur when something that can catch on fire is too close to the candle.

Granovsky and the association offer the following tips for candle safety:

- Keep candles at least a foot away from flammable items or surfaces.
- Do not put candles directly on surfaces. Use a sturdy candle holder with a drip plate for wax.
- Blow out candles when you leave the home or go to bed and avoid using candles in the bedroom or other areas where people may fall asleep.
- Replace candles before they burn all the way down or before the flame gets too close to the holder or container.
- In the event of a power outage, use flashlights or other battery-powered lighting instead of candles.

Granovsky said Christmas trees account for hundreds of fires annually.

"The fires typically start due to an open flame from a candle or a short in the electric lights," she said.

Granovsky said consumers who prefer a real Christmas tree should choose one with fresh, green needles that do not fall off when touched.

"And be sure to add water daily to the tree stand," she said. "You'll also want to make sure the tree is at least 3 feet away from any heat source and isn't blocking a door or exit."

Granovsky said many people forget the potential danger of real Christmas trees once they have been removed from the home.

"Dried-out trees constitute a real fire danger and should not be left in the home or garage, or placed outside next to the exterior walls of your home," she said. "See if your community has a recycling program or make arrangements for pick up from the appropriate city removal service as soon as possible."

According to the consumer Product Safety Commission, during November and December of last year there were 12 fatalities and an estimated 14,500 injuries treated in hospital emergency rooms as a result of injuries from holiday decorations. Falls, lacerations, back strains and ingestion of foreign objects were among the top holiday decorating-related injuries.

Granovsky and the safety commission offered the following suggestions for reducing injuries from Christmas decorations:

- If purchasing an artificial Christmas tree, choose one that is labeled as fire resistant.
- Take extra care when using a ladder to place holiday decorations, particularly when putting up heavy decorations with sharp edges or breakable components.
- Use lights that have the label of an independent testing laboratory and only where appropriate.
- Replace old or worn out light strings and turn off Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.
- Never use lit candles as a Christmas tree decoration. Keep any lit candles in sight and away from flammable items – and far from areas where they may be knocked over.

“A new report for the CPSC also shows that last year there were an estimated 183,800 injuries and 11 deaths in which a toy was associated with many of the incidents, even though the toy wasn’t necessarily the cause of the death or injury,” Granovsky said.

She said to help keep children safe during Christmas, the safety commission recommends choosing age-appropriate toys and for children younger than 3, avoiding toys with small parts that may pose a choking hazard.

“They also recommend that kids wear helmets and other safety gear when riding bikes, scooters, skateboards or other riding toys, and that they avoid riding scooters or skateboards on a street or roadway with motor vehicles.”

Granovsky said the safety commission also has identified magnets as a potential safety hazard for young children.

“According to the CPSC, children’s magnetic toys are covered by a strong safety standard that prevents magnets from being swallowed. However, some magnet sets also have small magnets that could pose a danger, so building and play sets with small magnets would be kept away from small children.”

Granovsky said consumers also need to be aware of toys that have been recalled in order to avoid inadvertently buying them as Christmas presents.

“Even though a product has been recalled, it is still possible that some retailers have not yet removed that product from their shelves, so it pays to double check that the toy you are about to buy has not been recalled,” she said.

Granovsky said consumers can check for specific product recalls by going to:

<http://www.cpsc.gov/en/Recalls/Recalls-by-Product/>.

Source: By: Paul Schattenberg, 210-859-5752, paschattenberg@ag.tamu.edu. Contact Nancy Granovsky, 979-845-1869, n-granovsky@tamu.edu, December 10, 2015

Texas Roads Have Not Had a Fatality Free day Since November 7, 2000 What if...We Could End the Streak!

It has been 16 years since Texas could claim a day where there were not fatalities on our roads. The fatalities add up to more than 55,578 people killed on Texas roadways over the past 16 years. According to the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) the leading causes of these deadly crashes continue to be failure to stay in one lane, alcohol and speed. TxDOT is promoting the “End the Streak” campaign to help end motor vehicle fatalities in Texas.

What if for one day everyone took responsibility for themselves and their friends and there were no drunk drivers on our roads. And there was not one person driving somewhere to drink without a plan for a sober ride home - and no underage drunk drivers were to be found anywhere.

What if there were no distracted drivers on the road. No teens were riding with other teens, which is the main source of their distractions and against the law according to the Graduated Driver License Law. What if no youth or adult was driving while using a cell phone and totally concentrating on their driving.

What if there was no driver speeding down the road and all were driving within the speed limit, including slowing down for construction and emergency vehicles, and driving more slowly and cautiously when weather conditions are bad.

What if we all took time to put on our seatbelts and make sure that all of our passengers were also buckled up. And, that all children were riding in the correct car seat for their age, weight and developmental stage. What if the car seat had been inspected by a certified child passenger safety technician to make sure it was being used correctly and installed correctly.

What if there were no drowsy drivers on the road and every driver, including commercial drivers, made sure they were well rested and prepared for the trip.

What if every driver made sure their vehicle and tires were in good condition and everyone drove defensively and civilly so that every car was treated as if the lives of the people inside were important. What if all drivers were looking out for each other.

What if all of these things could be done on the same day and Texas could once again enjoy a day where there was not one fatality on our roads? Then, we could put an end to this terrible streak of roadway deaths in Texas – and it would bear repeating!

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service reminds us that these do not have to be just rhetorical questions. For information on the End the Streak campaign visit:

<http://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/media-center/psas/end-streak.html>

AND MAY ALL YOUR CHRISTMAS BUDGETS BE IN THE BLACK

People can't do much to assure a white Christmas, but they can avoid going further into the red.

Don't dip into savings or max out credit cards just to purchase gifts, Texas AgriLife Extension Service family economics specialists recommended. Instead, think of creative ways of gift-giving and to celebrate the season.

"When people have traditions, they do things the way they always have done them without giving thought as to whether that is a sustainable and affordable way for them to have a holiday," said Nancy Granovsky, AgriLife Extension family economics specialist.

This may be the year for a change.

"This year might be the year when gifts come from the heart instead of the pocketbook," Dr. Joyce Cavanagh, AgriLife Extension family economics specialist, said.

- Have a yard sale. "People may have things that they no longer need or use," Cavanagh said. "That could be an income producing opportunity - having a yard sale or a garage sale and selling what they have that they no longer need. The additional resources can help provide some small gifts for a family or special foods for holiday meals.
- Cut back on the number of gifts. "Instead of each person buying each of nine adults a gift, draw names for one person each. Then make it a game to guess who gave that particular gift," Granovsky said. "Start a new tradition. It is not exactly the same as the previous one but may bring more happiness and fun to a gift exchange. Plus, our homes would not be filling with as many things as they tend to."
- Make gifts. "Think about how families probably celebrated the holidays during the Great Depression," Cavanagh added. "Make things for each other. Children might draw pictures for their grandparents or their aunts and uncles."

Granovsky agreed. "All children have special hobbies," she said. "If we could reinforce in children the fact that what they are producing with their hands, with their minds, with their abilities is going to be valued by somebody else, they may never have thought of it as a giftable skill. It is a gift to receive something that comes from another individual."

- Offer services. "What is it that someone could really use?" Cavanagh said. "Perhaps coupons for a free night of babysitting. Children might give to their parents a coupon that they will do some chore that their parent does. Adults might figure out what is it that their friends and family members enjoy. So think about what is it that you can do for someone else and give a homemade gift certificate."
- Think ordinary. "If you have an older relative who likes to write letters to people, some nice cards and stationary and postage stamps might be a good gift," she added. "Things that get at the every day kinds of things for people whose budgets might be tight make good gifts. That saves them the money that they might otherwise be spending on medication and food but also give them that uplift of continuing to be able to do something that is important to them."
- Spend time. "In many circumstances, the best gift that can be given is the gift of time," Granovsky added. "One good idea for someone who may be experiencing difficulty would be a greeting card, a very happy holiday greeting card with a special certificate that says 'I'm bringing dinner to you on such-and-such day' or 'The week of such-and-such you don't have to cook because we're going to bring over supper each evening.' That might be good for an elderly neighbor, a single mom struggling or certainly for parents of young children."
- Teach a skill. "We are seeing the trend toward more and more people starting to cook at home again, and in many cases cooking at home for the first time in a long time," Granovsky said. "So it is a time of skill-building for children. Holidays would be a perfect time to build a new family custom. Children can develop a new way of understanding food preparation that can be fun as well as save money for people."

Overall, the family economists noted, be open and honest with the family's expectations for gifts and financial reality.

"If you know that it is going to be a tough year at Christmas for your family, it's probably a good idea to begin to have some conversations with your kids about what their realistic expectations for the holiday might be," Cavanagh said. "If you are a family where in the past the kids have gotten a lot of things, and this year you know that's not going to happen, do some preparations about not having the same kind of gift Christmas as in the past, but it doesn't mean we can't enjoy Christmas."

Whatever the decisions are about gifts, the specialists said, watch spending.

“Don’t overuse credit cards to maintain the kind of Christmas from the past,” Granovsky said. “Every year we encourage people to budget for their expenses and limit what they spend on their credit cards. This year is going to be even more important to exercise additional restraint in using that credit.”

November 17, 2008, Source: Kathleen Phillips, 979-845-2872 Contact(s): Dr. Joyce Cavanagh, 979-845-3850, jacanagh@ag.tamu.edu, Nancy Granovsky, 979-845-3850, n-granovsky@tamu.edu

NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTIONS NEED SPECIFICS, REALISTIC GOAL-SETTING

Whether it’s resolving to exercise, lose weight or save money, taking certain specific steps will give that New Year’s resolution a better chance of succeeding, said Nancy Granovsky, Texas A&M AgrLife Extension Service specialist in family development and resource management, College Station.

“January is always a busy time for gyms due to people resolving to exercise and take better care of their bodies,” Granovsky said. “But it usually doesn’t take long for people to fall off the exercise wagon due to a lack of focus. It’s the same for people making financial resolutions that are not backed by a plan and specific steps to be taken.”

Granovsky said setting specific quantifiable goals is vital to “Committing to a specific outcome, such as working out three days a week or saving X dollars per month, gives you a baseline for forming a habit,” she said. “It gives you reachable goals that you can track as a way to sustain your willpower and hold yourself accountable.”

Granovsky said it is important to write down or “memorialize” goals and keep track of progress, including milestones that are set and met.

“The key to keeping resolutions is to set smaller goals that can be gradually built upon,” she said. “Don’t think you’re going to be able to make big changes in a short time frame. Break things up into small steps so you can gauge your progress. Start by setting goals that are neither too far out into the future nor too far out of your comfort zone.”

Keeping resolutions is a matter of changing habits or behaviors, she said. When something hasn’t yet become a habit, it is harder to remain committed to making a change.

“It may take a while to break an ‘unsuccessful’ habit and substitute it with a better one, but taking small initial steps is the key to improving your chances of success. You can start by choosing to have a healthy salad for lunch once or twice a week instead of something less healthy - or go to the gym once a week and then extend that to three times a week once you get into the habit.

“It’s also important that you don’t overwhelm yourself and remember to forgive yourself if you fail to meet your goals from time to time. Plus, you need to remember to reward yourself when you have reached a milestone in your progress.”

Granovsky said using technology or automation can also help keep resolutions.

“If you want to invest or save a certain amount of money over the year, setting up an automatic monthly transfer into a fund or savings account eliminates having to remember to save because that decision has essentially been ‘outsourced’ by automating it,” she said. “You can use technology to set up a family budget or use your computer’s calendar or your smart phone to remind you when you’re supposed to work out.

“There are also lots of gadgets and apps from an old-fashioned pedometer to more complex electronic activity trackers that can help you reach even more specific health-oriented goals. Technology can be a great help in reminding you to keep your resolutions until the new behaviors become second nature.”

Granovsky said finding others with similar goals can also improve the chances of keeping those resolutions.

“Find a walking or running partner who is equally committed to exercising more and make plans to walk or run together,” she said. “Or find an exercise class at the gym that meets at a regularly scheduled time that doesn’t conflict with your family or work obligations so you’ll have a better chance of making that class. If you have a friend you know who is good at saving money, you can ask if there are specific things he or she does toward budgeting or managing household finances.”

Granovsky said free informational materials on health, wellness, food and nutrition, money management and other topics are available from AgriLife Extension at <http://fcs.tamu.edu> (<http://fcs.tamu.edu>).

It’s okay to ask for help in reaching your New Year’s resolutions,” Granovsky said. “Often people fail in their resolutions because they don’t have adequate support or have trouble setting specific, attainable goals. Having support and encouragement is vital in reaching your goals and keeping your resolutions. So is making sure that you set specific goals that are doable and hold yourself accountable.”

Source: January 11, 2016, By: Paul Schattenberg, 210-859-5752, paschattenberg@ag.tamu.edu; Contact: Nancy Granovsky, 979-845-1869, n-granovsky@tamu.edu

FOOD - DRUG INTERACTIONS

Does it matter if I take medicine on a full or empty stomach?

It does, with some medicines. Some medicines can work faster, slower, better, or worse with a full or empty stomach.



What else can affect how my medicines work?

Other things that affect your medications are age, weight, sex; medical conditions; the dosage; other medications; and vitamins, herbals, and dietary supplements can all affect how your medicines work. Carefully follow label and pharmacist instructions.

A food-drug interaction can:

- Prevent certain medications from working the way they should.
- Cause some side effects to get better or worse.
- Cause a new side effect.

Grapefruit Juice

Grapefruit increases the absorption of certain medicines. This is the case with many cholesterol-lowering statins such as Lipitor, Zocor, and Crestor. It can also result in lower or higher blood levels of drugs than normal. This is the case with antihistamines, blood pressure drugs, thyroid replacement drugs, birth control, and stomach acid-blocking drugs.

Green Leafy Vegetables

Green leafy vegetables are high in Vitamin K and can decrease the ability of blood-thinners to prevent clotting. Problems only arise from significantly or suddenly increasing or decreasing intake. An example of an anticoagulant is Warfarin.

Tyramine-Containing Foods

Tyramine can cause a sudden, dangerous increase in your blood pressure. Take caution with MAOI antidepressants such as Nardil, Marplan, and Parnate. Tyramine is in chocolate, aged and mature cheeses, smoked and fermented meats, hot dogs, fermented soy products, and draft beers.

Natural Black Licorice

The main ingredient in licorice can deplete the body's potassium while increasing retention of sodium. Licorice can cause Digoxin (a heart medication) to not work properly, and also causes Warfarin to be broken down and increase the body's clotting mechanism.

Salt Substitutes

Salt substitutes often replace sodium with potassium. Lotensin and lisinopril are ACE inhibitors that reduce blood pressure and can also increase potassium in your body. Foods high in potassium need to be limited and are:

bananas, oranges, and green leafy vegetables.

Resources:

<http://www.eatright.org/resource/health/wellness/preventing-illness/common-food-drug-interactions>
<http://www.fda.gov/downloads/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/ensuringsafeuseofmedicine/GeneralUseofmedicine/UCM229033.pdf>

By: Alexandria Faubion, TTU Dietetic Intern 2016

HEALTHIER HOLIDAYS

Holidays are happy and fun, but they can also be stressful. Keep in mind these helpful hints in order to have a relaxing and stress-free holiday season. You should be able to enjoy the festivities and food without worry of weight gain, illness, or dehydration.

Seek Alternative Flavorings

Rather than using salt or butter for breads and other sides, use the gravy or even another sauce from a meat or salad that is already on your plate. By doing this, you're still adding flavor to your bread without extra calories from butter, oil, or salt.

Choose Wisely

When planning to eat a dessert, consider skipping an appetizer or one of the dishes offered in the main course. By skipping one food item and adding another, you won't be increasing your calories by nearly as much as you would if you ate it all. Choose more fresh fruits, vegetables, salads, and lean meats, and fewer fatty and high calorie foods.

Avoid Late Night Meals

It can be hard to gather all of the family and friends around the table at a regular meal time, but try to avoid eating past 8pm. When we eat right before we get in bed to go to sleep, we do not have enough time to burn the calories we consumed, which leads to weight gain.

Plan Ahead

Before attending the big holiday party at someone else's home, be sure to ask for the menu or a list of dishes being served. By doing so, you are able to plan your plate ahead of time and stick to your regular diet. You can pick out the lighter plates and know what sides and desserts you want to splurge on. If there seems to be nothing that fits your liking or your required dietary needs, you can plan to bring a healthier side to share that you can indulge on and not feel the guilt of weight gain afterwards.

Hydration is Key

With all of the grocery shopping, cooking, gift giving, and decorating taking place through the holiday season, our bodies need plenty of water to keep moving! Be sure to drink about 64 ounces of water per day, unless your doctor has required you to be on a fluid restrictive diet. If this is the case, only drink as much water as permitted and in the proper amount.

Be Active Indoors

If you're used to walking outdoors for exercise, this may be unappealing during the winter months. Rather than not exercising, find a local indoor facility to walk in daily, especially after eating large meals. Some great places to consider are malls, the YMCA or other nearby fitness facility, and even large discount stores and grocery stores. Better yet, you can multi-task and buy your groceries and other household items while you take your morning or afternoon walks!

Wash Hands Regularly

With the colder weather, germs are all around us, and the last place we want to be during the holidays is at the doctor's office or in the hospital. Be sure to wash your hands regularly, especially when there's a houseful of guests touching doorknobs and counter tops. Keep cooking surfaces clean prior to meal prep, and this, too, will decrease illness and contamination during this busy time of year.



Recipe Corner

Turkey, Cheese, and Vegetable Stuffed Potatoes

Ingredients:

- 2 baking potatoes
- ½ cup frozen mixed vegetables
- 2 slices (4 ounces) cooked turkey breast, diced
- 1 can (10 ounces) condensed cream of broccoli soup
- ¼ cup fat free sour cream
- ¼ cup fat free milk
- 1/8 tsp garlic powder
- 1/8 tsp black pepper
- ½ cup graded reduced fat cheddar cheese
- 2 green onions, washed and chopped

Instructions:

1. Wash and scrub potatoes; cover in foil and bake for 350° F.
2. In a medium sauce pan, combine vegetables, turkey, soup, sour cream, milk, garlic powder, and pepper, and mix well.
3. Over medium heat, simmer the mixture for about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
4. Cut warm potatoes lengthwise and squeeze them open.
5. Spoon equal portions of soup mixture down the center of the potato.
6. Sprinkle with cheddar cheese and green onions.

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 1 hour, 10 minutes

Cost Per Serving: \$1.33

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size ½ Stuffed Potato

Servings Per Container 4

Amount Per Serving

Calories 230 Calories from Fat 45

% Daily Value

Total Fat 5g	8%
Saturated Fat 2.5	13%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 40mg	13%
Sodium 380mg	16%
Total Carbohydrates 30g	10%
Dietary Fiber 5g	20%
Sugars 4g	
Protein 17g	

Vitamin A 10%

Vitamin C 40%

Calcium 30%

Iron 10%

Sources: www.Seniorguideonline.com,

www.truefreedomhomecare.com.

Created by Taylor Smith, TTU Dietetic Intern 2016

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "E. Kay Davis".

E. Kay Davis, M.S., L.D.

County Extension Agent -Family and Consumer Science
Lubbock County

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