

## **Making Holiday Memories with your Children**

With the holiday season upon us, family routines will be unpredictable which can cause challenges with young children's mood and behaviors. The key to minimize stress during the holidays for your child is to maintain your routine, provide healthy food choices and offer opportunities for your child to run and play.

Parents understand the importance of routines and how they can impact a child's behavior and sleep. During the holidays, routines are often left by the wayside for late family gatherings, long days of travel and disrupted meal patterns. To minimize holiday stress with your child, work on getting routines back to normal as soon as possible. After a late night family gathering, provide quiet, calm activities the next day and get your child to bed on time the next night.

Typically the holidays bring delicious family meals that contain favorite holiday treats. These meals are often less healthy than what your child is used to. Between all the extra sugary snacks and desserts coupled with the irregular meal times, it is easy for your child to eat less healthy foods. Be sure to provide healthy snacks like fruits, vegetables or whole grains before holiday gatherings and while one the go.

Keep your child active by getting fresh air and plenty of outside activity. Traveling and holiday gatherings don't allow for as much active play for children as they are used to during their regular schedule. The same can be said for adults. So start some new family traditions during gatherings to increase everyone's physical activity. Go outside, have a family food ball game or go for a walk. This will improve everyone's mood and alleviate stress, while also getting in some necessary physical activity.

Holiday gatherings are wonderful times to celebrate family, friends and love. Remember that children are subject to anxiety and stress just as adults are during the holidays is important. By creating an environment of success with routine, healthy eating and exercise, children will develop favorable holiday memories that are the true gift during the holidays.

Source: Michigan State University Extension.=