

Safe and Healthy Holiday

The holidays are great opportunities to enjoy time with family and friends, to celebrate life, to be grateful, and to reflect on what's important. They are also a time to appreciate – and safeguard – the gift of health.

While we enjoy the holidays, don't forget to take time to care for yourself. Here are some holiday tips to help keep you and your family well this holiday season. These come from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Eat Healthy and Be Active

Eating healthy can be a challenge and especially during the holiday when there are a lot of traditional foods, we eat whether at home or gatherings. Healthy eating is all about balance and moderation. Holiday parties and big family meals may tempt us away from our healthy eating habits. Allow yourself to have your favorite foods but stick to smaller servings and balance them with healthier options. Choose fresh fruit as a festive and sweet substitute for candy. Limit fats, salt, and sugary foods and drinks.

Staying active can help you keep a healthy weight during the holiday season. Look for opportunities to work physical activities into your holiday: Go for a stroll after a family meal, take a walk at the mall, or dance to your favorite holiday music. Aim to get at least 150 minutes a week of physical activity. For example, that could be at least 20 minutes a day or 30 minutes five days a week. It's important to move more and sit less.

Get Your Flu Vaccination

Influenza (flu) is more than a cold, or even a "bad cold." It can result in serious health complications like pneumonia, bacterial infections, hospitalization, or death. It can be especially hard of people with other chronic illnesses and low immune systems. If you didn't yet get a flu vaccination this season, it's not too late! CDC recommends that everyone age 6 months and older get vaccinated now if they have not already been vaccinated this season.

Food Safety

Food poisoning can ruin even the most festive celebrations. Each year, an estimated 1 in 6 Americans get sick from eating contaminated food.

Take simple steps to protect your family's health when you prepare and serve holiday meals such as:

- Wash your hands and work surfaces before, during, and after preparing food, and before eating.
- Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs separated during preparation.
- Cook food at the right internal temperature to kill harmful germs. Use a food thermometer to check.
- Refrigerate perishable foods, including leftovers, within two hours of buying or cooking.

Handwashing

Handwashing is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of germs and to keep kids and adults healthy, especially during the winter months. Evidence shows handwashing can help prevent 1 in 5 respiratory illnesses like the cold or flu, so understanding how and when to wash hands is critical for staying healthy. If soap and water are not available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Cold Weather Safety and Home Heating

Outdoor activities during cold weather can expose you to several safety hazards, but you can [take steps to be prepared](#) while getting the exercise you need.

Start by wearing warm clothing, a wind-resistant coat or jacket, mittens, hats, scarves, and waterproof boots. To protect from hypothermia, don't forget to dress in layers. Additional safety precautions when participating in outdoor recreation include always carry a cell phone, work slowly when doing outside chores, sprinkle cat litter or sand on icy patches, and take along a buddy and an emergency kit.

Have your heating system, water heater, and any other gas, oil, or coal burning appliances serviced by a qualified technician every year to keep your family safe from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. Install a battery-operated or battery backup CO detector where it will awaken your family at night if the alarm is triggered. Each year, more than 400 Americans die from unintentional CO poisoning not linked to fires, more than 20,000 visit the emergency room, and more than 4,000 are hospitalized.

Cope with Stress

Everyone—adults, teens, and even children – experiences stress from time to time. Feeling emotional and nervous or having trouble sleeping and eating can all be normal reactions to stress. Learning healthy ways to cope with stress and getting the right care and support can help reduce stressful feelings and symptoms.

Travel Safety

Winter storms and cold temperatures can be dangerous. Stay safe and healthy this winter by planning. Whether you're traveling across town or around the world, ensure that your trip is safe:

- Get your car ready for cold weather before winter arrives.
- Don't drink and drive – and don't let others drive when they've been drinking.
- Wear a helmet when riding a bicycle or skateboarding to help prevent head injuries.
- Wear a seat belt every time you drive or ride in a motor vehicle, and always buckle your child in the car using a car seat, booster seat, or seat belt appropriate for their weight, height, and age.

Anyone traveling more than four hours, whether by air, car, bus, or train, can be at risk for blood clots. Blood clots can form in your legs during travel because you are sitting still in a confined space for long periods of time. Protect yourself during the holiday travel season by moving your legs frequently, know the symptoms of blood clots and when to get help and if you are at risk for blood clots talk to your doctor.