

AltHealth: Happy and Healthy Holidays



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Nobody wants to get sick over the holidays, yet this is the time of year when our health can be put most at risk. The seasonal change-over is tough on our immune systems – the cold puts stress on our hearts and the diminishing light can throw many of us into a slough of depression. The pressure of gift buying and impending family visits is building, and we are exposed to viruses and sniffles everywhere we go. It's a good time to take control of things before they take control of you.

Flu season is in full swing; get vaccinated. There are no guarantees of 100% protection, so wash your hands often and use those sanitizing wipes on your cart at stores. Avoid running your hand along railings! Viruses are passed along on surfaces and they're airborne. If someone at work is coughing, slap a mask on them.

Seasonal Affective Disorder may be nipping at your nose, but resist the urge to hide under the blankets in a fetal position until the spring thaw. You will feel more optimistic and stay warmer if you keep a regular exercise program – aerobics stoke your internal fires like nothing else; exercise is also a natural antidepressant. If you want to make it fun, I suggest busting some moves out to music for 20 minutes a day to get your circulation going. One good boogie to Bruno Mars' "Uptown Funk" can do wonders.

If you have an existing or chronic condition, don't forget to take your medications. When you are running around taking care of extra chores and gift buying, it's easy to forget.

If you have a heart condition, or if it runs in your family, this, combined with the general stress and chilly temps, can be deadly. Please take extra care – the heart attack rate rises though the holidays. Stress makes people do things like raid the fridge at 2am or skip exercise routines. People who smoke tend to smoke more. Everyone tends to allow insane indulgences, citing the "I'll quit after New Years" clause. Just keep something in mind – having ONE forbidden piece of cheesecake is one thing; going through an entire box of chocolate-covered cherries and then inhaling a salad sized bowl of dressing with gravy EVERY DAY is another. Indulgence can kill if your health is in a delicate balance. People are going to be throwing sugar-coated, bacon-filled crap at you all season long. If you keep up a healthy diet at home, you start out ahead of the game. Eat your fruits and veggies!

Don't turn your house into a fire trap with flammable pine needles, space heaters and candle clusters. Avoid overloading your circuits with Christmas lights and don't try to deep fry a turkey on the back porch. Your insurance won't cover it. Trust me on this one.

Speaking of food, use some common sense to avoid food poisoning. Cook foods to proper temperature and refrigerate perishables promptly. As much as you want to rush the process, don't leave a frozen 20 lb bird on your counter to save time in thawing. Either give it two days in the fridge or immerse it in cold water. Also, be careful about leaving canapes and appetizers sitting around in warm rooms all day. Dairy spoils. Rice develops contaminants faster that you can say, "I need the bathroom, NOW!" The refrigerator is your friend. Embrace it.

Let's face facts - people drink more over the holidays. This makes everything from getting in your car to carving a turkey a potential opportunity for holiday mayhem or even death. Basic rule of thumb: Don't drink and drive. If you've been at the party too long, call an Uber or get a friend to drive you home. Make sure you are using your seatbelt. While you are on the road, watch out for those who are not as smart as you. Defensive maneuvers may be necessary. Stay alert!

Speaking of carving a turkey, Motif's editor is terrified of electric carving knives. I fully understand her qualms, because just the sound of those things makes me think of dentists' drills and chain saws. PLEASE exercise caution in using all electrical appliances. If you have been drinking, don't pick up the carving knife. It may seem like a fun idea, but you'll change your mind after those blood-curdling screams erupt.

And let's not forget those little darlings who wake us up at 5am on our day off because they just can't wait for Santa. If you have children in your house, keep them safe by screening potentially dangerous toys and stowing hot, sharp and poisonous objects out of reach.

The holidays can be a time of wonder and joy for all of us if we use some common sense. Just don't forget - whatever you put on hold until the New Year is going to bite you on the butt, with interest, the day 2019 kicks in. Whether you start things off with a clean slate or a pile of bills and extra pounds, it's all up to you. Choose wisely.