



We at Health Wave wish each and every one of you  
a very Healthy, Happy and Peaceful Holiday Season.

# HANDS-ONHealth

Health Wave Newsletter, December 2009

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## Holiday Health & Safety Tips

The holidays are a time to celebrate, give thanks, and reflect. During these challenging times, it is more important than ever to be mindful of our health and the health of our loved ones. Please follow these tips from the CDC about how to stay healthy and safe during this holiday season.

### Wash Your Hands Often

Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. It is best to wash your hands with soap and clean running water for 20 seconds. However, if soap and clean water are not available, use an alcohol-based product to clean your hands. Alcohol-based hand rubs significantly reduce the number of germs on skin and are fast acting.

#### When washing hands with soap and water:

- **Wet your hands** with clean running water and apply soap. Use warm water if it is available.
- **Rub hands together** to make a lather and scrub all surfaces.
- **Continue rubbing** hands for 20 seconds. Need a timer? Imagine singing "Happy Birthday" twice through to a friend!
- **Rinse hands** well under running water
- **Dry your hands** using a paper towel or air dryer. If possible, use your paper towel to turn off the faucet

#### When should you wash your hands?

- Before preparing or eating food
- After going to the bathroom
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has gone to the bathroom
- Before and after tending to someone who is sick
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After handling an animal or animal waste
- After handling garbage
- Before and after treating a cut or wound





## Stay Warm

Cold temperatures can cause serious health problems, especially in infants and older adults. Stay dry, and dress warmly in several layers of loose-fitting, tightly woven clothing.

## Prepare Your Home

- If you plan to use a **fireplace or wood stove** for emergency heating, have your chimney or flue inspected each year. Also, if you'll be using a fireplace, wood stove, or kerosene heater, install a smoke detector and a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector near the area to be heated. Test them monthly, and replace batteries twice a year.
- Your ability to feel a change in temperature decreases with age, and **older people** are more susceptible to health problems caused by cold. If you are over 65 years old, place an easy-to-read thermometer in an indoor location where you will see it frequently, and check the temperature of your home often during the winter months.
- Insulate any **water lines** that run along exterior walls so your water supply will be less likely to freeze. To the extent possible, weatherproof your home by adding weather-stripping, insulation, insulated doors and storm windows, or thermal-pane windows.
- If you have **pets**, bring them indoors. If you cannot bring them inside, provide adequate shelter to keep them warm and make sure that they have access to unfrozen water.

## Prepare Your Car for Winter

You can avoid many dangerous winter travel problems by planning ahead. Have maintenance service on your vehicle as often as the manufacturer recommends.

Keep your car fueled and in good working order. Be sure to check the following:

- Antifreeze
- Windshield wiper fluid (wintertime mixture)
- Heater
- Brakes
- Ignition
- Emergency flashers
- Exhaust
- Tires (air pressure and wear)  
Where necessary change to snow tires or put on chains
- Fuel
- Oil
- Brake fluid
- Defroster
- Battery
- Radiator



## Travel Safely

Whether you're traveling across town or around the world, help ensure your trip is safe.

- **Don't drink and drive**, and don't let someone else drink and drive.
- **Wear a seat belt** every time you drive or ride in a motor vehicle.
- Always buckle your child in the car using a **child safety seat**, booster seat, or seat belt according to his/her height, weight, and age.
- **Avoid traveling in low-visibility conditions** and on ice-covered roads, overpasses, and bridges.



## Stock Up on Emergency Supplies

Have a week's worth of food and safety supplies. If you live far from other people, have more supplies on hand.

### Food and Safety Checklist

- Drinking water
- Canned/no-cook food (bread, crackers, dried fruits)
- Non-electric can opener
- Baby food and formula (if baby in the household)
- Prescription drugs and other medicine
- First-aid kit
- Rock-salt to melt ice on walkways
- Supply of cat litter or bag of sand to add traction on walkways
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Battery-powered lamps or lanterns (To prevent the risk of fire, avoid using candles.)



## Manage Stress

The holidays don't need to take a toll on your health. Keep a check on over-commitment and over-spending. Balance work, home, and play. Get support from family and friends. Practice time management. Keep a relaxed and positive outlook.

- **Get organized.** Make lists for every-

thing: "Things-to-do", gifts to buy, errands to run. Keep a pad and pen in the car, by your bed, in the kitchen, at your desk – when you think of something write it down. Don't expect to remember it later, you are already on overload

- **Simplify** family traditions that are too much work. You don't have to let go of them altogether, just simplify them so they can be an enjoyable part of the holiday festivities.
- **Get enough sleep.** Fatigue itself can lead to stress, lack of patience, overeating and susceptibility to illness.
- **Memories** of lost or separated friends and relatives can be stronger and more difficult to handle around the holidays. If you're feeling saddened or overwhelmed, talk to your family or friends. Don't be afraid or embarrassed to reach out for help.
- **Do something special for people you don't know.** Call a local shelter or nursing home to see how you can help. Helping the less fortunate helps put your own problems into perspective.
- **Plan a post-holiday activity** that every can look forward to.

## Watch the Kids

Children are at high risk for injuries that can lead to death or disability. Keep a watchful eye on your kids when they're eating and playing. Keep dangerous toys, foods, and household items out of their reach, including choking hazards like coins and hard candy. Learn how to provide early treatment for children who are choking. Make sure toys are used properly\*.

- **Avoid toys that shoot or include parts that fly off.** Slingshots and even water guns are dangerous because they invite children to target other kids. BB guns should not even be considered toys.
- **Inspect toys for sturdiness.** Your child's toys should be durable with no sharp edges or points. The toys should also withstand impact.

### \*READ THE LABEL...

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission requires toy manufacturers to meet stringent safety standards and to label certain toys that could be a hazard for younger children. Look for labels that give age recommendations and use that information as a guide. Labels on toys that state "not recommended for children under three ... contains small parts," are labeled that way because they may pose a choking hazard to children under three. Toys should be developmentally appropriate to suit the skills, abilities and interests of the child.

For 2007, the Commission has reports of 18 toy-related deaths and CPSC staff estimates that there were about 170,100 hospital emergency-room treated toy-related injuries to children under 15. Most of the deaths were associated with airway obstruction from small toys, drowning, or motor vehicle accidents during play. Most of the injuries were lacerations, contusion and abrasions; the head and face was the area most frequently affected.

- **Don't give toys with small parts to young children.** Young kids tend to put things in their mouths, increasing the risk of choking.
- **Read directions carefully and follow suggested age levels.** Ask yourself if the toy is right for your child's ability and age.
- **Repair or throw away damaged toys.**
- **Keep toys meant for older children away from younger ones.**
- **Make a list of safety rules and share them with your child.** If your child is playing with friends, tell everyone your safety rules.
- **Remain aware of recalled products.**

## Prevent Injuries

Injuries from falls and fireworks often occur around the holidays. Use step stools instead of furniture when hanging decorations. Leave the fireworks to the professionals.

Most residential fires occur during the winter months. Keep candles away from children, pets, walkways, trees, and curtains. Never leave fireplaces, stoves, or candles unattended. Don't use generators, grills, or other gasoline- or charcoal-burning devices inside your home or garage. Install a smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector in your home. Test them once a month, and replace batteries twice a year.



### Fire Deaths and Injuries: Prevention Tips:

- Never leave food unattended on a stove.
- Keep cooking areas free of flammable objects (such as, potholders and towels).
- Avoid wearing clothes with long, loose-fitting sleeves when cooking.



- Never smoke in bed or leave burning cigarettes unattended.
- Do not empty smoldering ashes in a trash can, and keep ashtrays away from upholstered furniture and curtains.
- Never place portable space heaters near flammable materials (such as, drapery).
- Keep all matches and lighters out of reach of children. Store them up high, preferably in a locked cabinet.
- Install smoke alarms on every floor of the home, including the basement, and particularly near rooms in which people sleep.
- Use long-life smoke alarms with lithium-powered batteries and hush buttons, which allow persons to stop false alarms quickly. If long-life alarms are not available, use regular alarms, and replace the batteries annually.
- Test all smoke alarms every month to ensure they work properly.
- Devise a family fire escape plan and practice it every 6 months. In the plan, describe at least two different ways each family member can escape every room, and designate a safe place in front of the home for family members to meet after escaping a fire.
- If possible, install or retrofit fire sprinklers into home.

## Be Smoke-free

Live a healthier life and lower your risk for disease by avoiding smoking and secondhand smoke. If you smoke, quit today! Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW or talk to your health care provider for help.



## Get Check-ups and Vaccinations

(see Nov newsletter)

Exams and screenings can help find problems before they start. They can also help find problems early, when the chances for treatment and cure are better. Vaccinations help prevent diseases and save lives. Schedule a visit with your health care provider for a yearly exam. Ask what vaccinations and tests you should get based on your age, lifestyle, travel plans, medical history, and family health history.

## Handle and Prepare Food Safely

As you prepare holiday meals, keep you and your family safe from food-related illness. Wash hands and surfaces often. Avoid cross-contamination by keeping raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs (including their juices) away from ready-to-eat foods and eating surfaces. Cook foods to the proper temperature. Refrigerate promptly. Do not leave perishable foods out for more than two hours.

**Clean:** Wash hands and food-contact surfaces often. Bacteria can spread throughout the kitchen and get onto cutting boards, knives, sponges, and counter tops.

**Separate:** Don't cross-contaminate—don't let bacteria spread from one food product to another. This is especially true for raw meat, poultry and seafood. Keep these foods and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods.

**Cook:** Cook to proper temperatures. Foods are properly cooked when they are heated for a long enough time and at a high enough temperature to kill the harmful bacteria that cause foodborne illness.

**Chill:** Refrigerate promptly. Refrigerate foods quickly keeps most harmful bacteria from growing and multiplying. Refrigerators should be set at 40 F and the freezer at 0 F, and the accuracy of the settings should be checked occasionally with a thermometer.

Keep raw meat separate from ready-to-eat foods and eating surfaces. Wash cutting boards and knives thoroughly with soap and water after use.



## Eat Healthy and Be Active

With balance and moderation, you can enjoy the holidays the healthy way. Choose fresh fruit as a festive and sweet substitute for candy. Select just one or two of your favorites from the host of tempting foods. Find fun ways to stay active, such as dancing to your favorite holiday music. Adults should get at least 30 minutes and children should get at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity most, preferably all, days of the week.

### Holidays the Healthy Way

- **Overcome the urge to overeat.** Standing by the buffet table is temptation to overeat. Remember holiday parties are a time to celebrate with family and friends, not just food.
- Make sure to **watch portion sizes** and select one or two of your favorites from the host of tempting foods.
- Leave those extra calories behind — **limit your intake of foods high in fat or added sugar.**
- If you drink **alcohol**, do so **in moderation.**
- **Remember calories add up!** This is especially true during the holidays when we snack more. For a healthy snack, choose a piece of fresh fruit.
- You've tried the leftover turkey sandwich; now **try the leftover turkey salad!** Add a few pieces of turkey to a generous portion of mixed greens, cucumbers, mushrooms, peppers, or any other vegetables you like. Sprinkle with dried cranberries for that authentic holiday taste.

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