



Heart-Healthy Tips: Holiday Health and Safety

Courtesy of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The holidays are a time to celebrate, give thanks, and reflect. They are also a time to pay special attention to your health. Give the gift of health and safety to yourself and others by following these holiday tips.

- ▶ **Wash your hands often.** Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps you can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Wash your hands with soap and clean running water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and clean water are not available, use an alcohol-based product.
- ▶ **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.
- ▶ **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.
- ▶ **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.
- ▶ **Be smoke-free.** Avoid smoking and breathing other people's 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.** 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.
- ▶ **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 potentially dangerous toys, food, drinks, household items, choking hazards (like coins and hard candy), and other objects out of kids' reach. Learn how to provide early treatment for children who are choking. Make sure toys are used properly.
- ▶ **Prevent injuries.** Injuries can occur anywhere and some often occur around the holidays. Use step stools instead of furniture when hanging decorations. Leave the fireworks to the professionals. Wear a bicycle helmet to help prevent head injuries. Most residential fires occur during the winter months. Keep candles away from children, pets, walkways, trees,

Find more health and wellness tips and resources for first responders at www.healthy-firefighter.org.

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.

- ▶ **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.
- ▶ **Eat healthy and stay 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. Be active for at least 2½ hours a week. Help kids and teens be active for at least 1 hour a day.