

Health Tip for December 5, 2021

Avoiding Health Pitfalls During the Holiday Season

We all enjoy the festive holiday season of Christmas. This is a time when Christians from all over the world celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. It is a time when family and friends come together and share their love for each other. Gifts and plenty of delicious food are the hallmarks of the celebration. However, amid the festivities there are some things we need to be aware of in order to protect our physical and emotional health.

We must remember we are still in a Covid 19 pandemic. Therefore, the health risks are even greater than normal due to holiday events, family gatherings and unhealthy dietary practices.

Here are some health risks you may experience during this holiday season and some ways we can prevent or minimize the risk while still enjoying the holidays.

- **Poor food choices/overindulgence:** You may have been “good” all year, so you feel it’s alright to throw caution to the wind during the holidays. You will probably eat foods you don’t normally eat. Each cook wants to exhibit their culinary skills and we feel obliged to “try a little of everything”. Your body will usually react in a way that will cause you digestive discomfort, or worse problems such as: acid reflux, rise in blood pressure, headaches and eventual weight gain. Try to stay as close to your normal eating habits as possible. Try eating salads first, drink lots of water before the meal. Make healthier choices such as lean meats, vegetables. Skip the gravies and sauces. Eat smaller portions and don’t get a “to go plate”.
- **Food Poisoning:** During the holiday rush with various people bringing food; the food may not be prepared properly, stored properly or it may be left out too long. Make sure food is kept at the proper temperature and refrigerated as soon as possible. Wash raw fruits and vegetable thoroughly. Never reheat more than once.
- **Intoxication:** The holidays seems to offer excuses for excessive drinking. Even those who don’t normally drink may decide to drink alcoholic beverages, which can lead to intoxication. Intoxication can put you at a higher risk for accidents such as auto accidents, falls, and cuts. Drinking is also a factor in many health problems. You can have fun without the alcohol.
- **Holiday Blues.** While the holidays are meant to be a cheerful time, the rush of holiday activities, expectations and invited relatives can cause what is known as “holiday blues”. What is meant to be a time of happiness can often cause tiredness, sadness and

difficulty concentrating. The best way to avoid this is to take breaks (do something relaxing), remind yourself of the real meaning of Christmas

- **Stress:** Over committing one's self, trying to have "the perfect Christmas" or overspending can contribute to stress that can have a negative impact on your health. Stress can trigger illnesses or aggravate chronic conditions such as heart disease or hypertension. It can lead to symptoms like sleep problems, headaches, loss of appetite, anxiety and loss of concentration. Stress can also take a toll on your immune system. This can be a major issue in the climate of a pandemic. Plan to get enough sleep and rest. Listen to your body and adjust your activity pace accordingly.

The holidays can be a time of enjoyment and great festivities but remember don't let it be a time that can cause problems for the upcoming year. Spending time with loved ones should be a great time to relax and enjoy the season.

Information Resources: Makati Medical Center/7 Not-So-Jolly-Health Risk of Christmas

HAVE A MERRY AND HEALTHY CHRISTMAS!!

Submitted by Gloria Elliott, RN BSN