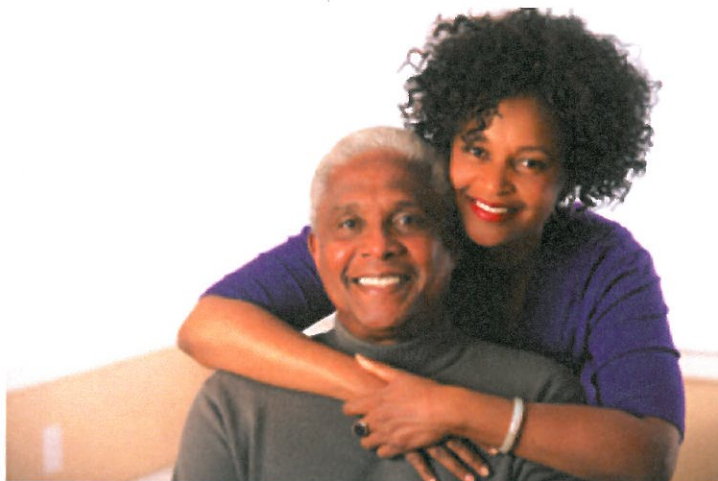


December 2012

## 12 Ways to Keep the Holidays Stress-Free

The holidays are supposed to be a time of warmth, joy and excitement. And for many people, they are.

Still, the anxiety of having too much to do in too little time, the pressure of unrealistic expectations and the tendency to overeat and overspend can easily overshadow holiday happiness. The following suggestions will help you enjoy the season to its fullest with a minimum of stress.



### Eat smart

- Don't arrive at a party starving; you're likely to overeat. Instead, before you leave home eat a piece of fruit, a small salad or a cup of low-fat yogurt. Eating a healthful snack will prevent you from overindulging on mini quiches and other high-fat fare when you arrive.
- Avoid handfuls of anything. At the appetizer table, fill your plate three-quarters full with fresh vegetables and fruit. Reserve the remaining quarter for anything you want, even if it's high in fat, so you don't feel deprived.
- Don't feel obligated to eat everything on your plate or to have dessert. And think twice before going back for seconds.
- If you overeat, get right back into your normal routine the next day.

### Shop smart

- Give yourself plenty of time to complete your holiday shopping. Shop with an itemized list of what you'll buy for each person and a ballpark figure of what you'll spend.
- Brainstorm for gift ideas. If you're stumped on what to buy, consider what's important to the gift recipient. To personalize a gift that isn't personal, give the story behind it. For a book, write an inscription that explains why you're giving it or mention specific pages the recipient may find interesting.

## Party smart

- Keep parties simple by having a buffet instead of a formal sit-down dinner. Serve uncomplicated dishes (made with six ingredients or less) that you've made before.
- Buy nonperishable party items days, even weeks, in advance. These include groceries, beverages, candles, napkins and decorations. Save the day before to buy items with a short shelf life, such as fresh fruits, vegetables and flowers.
- Cook ahead. On the day before your party, prepare salad dressings, stews, casseroles, cold sauces, soups, desserts and dips. That way, during the party, you can spend as much time as possible with your guests.
- Hire a helper. To make your party more manageable, employ a teenager or a catering waiter to help you serve during the party and clean up afterward.
- Devise games guests can play to help spark conversation. For example, tape a piece of paper with the name of a movie character onto the back of guests when they arrive. Challenge them to guess who their characters are, with clues provided by the other guests.
- Be sociable. Attending parties when you don't know many people can be stressful. To break the ice, elect yourself the official introducer. If you see someone standing alone, go over and ask nonthreatening openers. For example, ask these questions at a corporate function: How do you fit into the company? Are you a spouse or an employee? What do you do? What does your spouse do?

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## How to Survive the Sniffles

Going out in cold weather without a coat will not cause a cold. Wearing wet clothing will not cause a cold. A cold virus causes a cold. And one of the best ways to prevent a cold is to reduce the chances that someone will pass the virus on to you.

"Colds are caused by viruses passed by person-to-person contact, not by getting a chill or wearing wet socks," says Jack Gwaltney Jr., M.D., head of the department of epidemiology and virology at the University of Virginia School of Medicine in Charlottesville. "Someone with a cold rubs his or her nose then touches your hand. As soon as you touch your nose or wipe your eyes, you're infected."

### Protect yourself

Because cold viruses enter the body through the nose, mouth and eyes, you can protect yourself most effectively by keeping your hands away from those areas. These preventive measures also help:

Wash your hands often, especially after playing with children, shaking hands with someone who has a cold or touching things used by a person with a cold.



Teach children to use disposable tissues and throw them away.

Move away from someone who is coughing or sneezing. The spray that may carry the virus travels about three feet before falling to the ground.

Keep your face clean. Keep long hair out of your eyes.

Wash your eyeglasses often with water or cleaning solution. Avoid sharing eyeglasses, sunglasses or goggles. Always wash your hands before touching contact lenses.

## Soothe the symptoms

"Not everyone infected with a cold virus gets sick," Dr. Gwaltney says. "You may help your immune system fight a virus by getting enough rest and exercise and by keeping stress at a manageable level."

If you do develop a cold, Dr. Gwaltney recommends the following self-care treatments for your symptoms:

For nasal congestion, nose drops are more effective than oral decongestants and have fewer side effects. But use the drops for only two to three days. The drops have a rebound effect after that, making congestion worse.

For coughs, use a medicine with a cough suppressant such as dextromethorphan. Expectorant-only cough medicines are less effective.

To soothe a sore throat, mix a teaspoon of salt in a glass of warm water and gargle, or use throat lozenges with topical anesthetics.

To relieve muscle aches and fever, take aspirin, acetaminophen or ibuprofen.

Apply petroleum jelly or lip-chap ointment to a raw, red nose. Both products act as a protective barrier between sensitive areas and nasal secretions.

## When to call a doctor

Most colds get better in five to seven days without medical attention. Call a doctor if:

- Symptoms seem especially severe or different from those you usually experience with a cold.
- The cold lasts longer than usual.
- A fever of 101 degrees or higher lasts more than three days.
- You have trouble breathing or swallowing.
- You're suffering severe ear pain.
- Mucus or sputum is thick, green or rusty or odorous.

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## How to Enjoy Your Plane Flight

### Be sure it leaves you feeling right

The ads are so inviting -- smiling attendants, comfortable seats, the "friendly skies." But flying can create a host of creature discomforts as well. By changing some of your in-flight habits, you can have a trip that leaves you ready to enjoy your destination.

### Ear Pressure

Uncomfortable pressure in the ears is a common annoyance during flight. Once airborne, cabin pressure typically equals air pressure at about 6,000 to 8,000 feet. As the atmosphere becomes thinner, the air inside your ears pushes outward on your eardrum. On the way up, yawning is usually enough to equalize the pressure. On the way down, however, air pressure increases again and pushes your eardrum inward. When this happens, try the Valsalva maneuver -- breathe in, hold your nose, close your mouth and gently push your breath up toward the back of your nose and throat.

### Circulation Problems

Hours spent in a cramped, upright chair can decrease circulation in your feet and legs and can lead to the development of dangerous blood clots or DVT (deep vein thrombosis). To promote good circulation, get out of your seat at least once an hour and walk the aisle. If that's impossible, try a simple isometric exercise in your seat. Hook your feet beneath the seat in front of you and lift one foot against the seat bottom as if you're trying to straighten your leg. Hold for a few seconds and repeat with the other foot. Then try both at the same time.

### Dry Air

We think of deserts as the driest places we could ever visit, but an airplane cabin at 35,000 feet is far more parched than a desert. The reason? All the fresh air in the cabin during flight is collected by devices near the engines and pumped in. Air at such high altitudes contains very little moisture.

Your body will try to compensate for the low humidity, but without a source of moisture it will become dehydrated -- and you'll start to feel run-down, irritable, even light-headed. Here are some suggestions to avoid dehydration:

- Drink as much water as you can, before, during and after the flight.
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, salts and sugars on the flight. All act as diuretics, robbing your body of much-needed moisture.
- Moisturize your skin during the flight with travel-size skin creams and lip balm. Take a hot bath or shower as soon as you can after you land.

## Colds and flu

On most commercial flights, as much as 50 to 60 percent of the air you breathe is recycled. That means the carbon dioxide you exhale passes through filters, mixes with fresh air from the outside and is vented back into the cabin. Some experts say this creates fertile ground for the spread of colds or flu, while others disagree.

For those who are airborne, it probably pays to play it safe. Washing your hands frequently, keeping your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth can reduce your chances of catching a virus.

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