

Keeping your health and wellbeing in the know

MyHealthTALK

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Courtesy of Asset Health



Giving Yourself the Best Gift

The best gift this holiday season may be setting goals that allow you to enjoy time spent with family and friends—without sacrificing your health or peace of mind. Festive parties, decorating, shopping, entertaining and scheduling can add stress to your celebrations—instead of peace, joy and love. An abundance of delicious foods and desserts can sidetrack your healthy behaviors during the holidays, if you let them. Instead, give yourself the gift of embracing your Christmas and New Year with healthy living.

There are countless ways that you can give yourself the gift of good health. Throughout December, plan regular meals with healthy foods to avoid over-indulging in tempting, high calorie goodies. At holiday parties, you don't need to throw all of your healthy behaviors out the window. Fill half of your plate with vegetables and try not to go back for seconds. If you do go back, do so for vegetables and only have a few, bite-sized portions of fattening foods. Limit yourself to reasonable portion sizes of dessert at holiday meals.

It's also important to take good care of your emotional health during the holidays. Physical demands, finances and relationships are three major triggers that can turn merriment into anxiety or depression. Plan ahead, evaluate your obligations and remember that it's okay to say, "No." Just because you have gone to the same party or followed the same tradition for the last decade doesn't mean that you have to do it *this* year.

Manage your expectations, remembering that reality does not always live up to them. If you're comparing your holidays to some picturesque greeting card, you'll likely come up short. Instead of being hung up on what the holidays are supposed to be and how you are supposed to feel, take the holidays as they come. If you are experiencing the loss of a loved one, it's common to feel sadness, disappointment or emotional pain. If your emotions alter your appetite or sleep patterns, seek professional help.

Be good to yourself and your health during the holidays. Maintaining good health during the holidays will allow you to feel great, roll with the punches and truly enjoy your family and friends. This is the season of compassion and forgiveness. Spread it around, and remember to save some of it for yourself.



WRAPPING YOUR HOLIDAYS IN *Good Health*

-  **Give yourself** the gift of laughter. When things go wrong or not according to plan, don't forget to keep your sense of humor.
-  **Stick to** your normal routine as much as possible. Avoid staying too late at parties or depriving yourself of sleep.
-  **Keep up** with your exercise routine. A busy schedule coupled with dark nights and cold weather can disrupt your physical activities—but don't let it. Even 20 minutes of daily exercise decreases stress levels and is important for maintaining good mental and physical health.
-  **Forget about** the trivial stuff. Don't drive yourself crazy just to live up to holiday perfection or tradition. So what if you don't get the special Christmas mugs out of the basement? Give yourself a break. Worrying about minor matters can stifle your holiday spirit.
-  **Don't fret** about things that are beyond your control. If your father and brother get into a fight every Christmas Eve, remember that you can't control everything. Keep your own limits in mind. You can control your own reaction to the situation. Accept relationships as they are rather than as you want them to be.

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- 🎁 **Looking for** the perfect gifts? If you feel overwhelmed, it's not the time to be spending hours searching for the ultimate gift for your great aunt or mail carrier.
- 🎁 **Save yourself** time, inconvenience, and the horrors of finding a parking spot at a crowded mall by doing more of your shopping in cyberspace.
- 🎁 **Avoid** financial anxiety by setting up a budget and sticking to it. It's far too easy to spend beyond our means before and after Christmas. Keep in mind that you don't need to achieve perfection to experience a wonderful holiday.
- 🎁 **Eat sensibly.** However, don't beat yourself up if you over-indulge on cookies and candy in the break room. Just promise yourself that you'll get back on track the next day.
- 🎁 **If you drink,** limit your consumption of alcoholic beverages. Holidays can invite the problem of excessive drinking. Keep in mind that alcohol is a depressant and abusing it will make you feel worse. If you drink, make certain that you have a designated driver.

- 🎁 **Consider** finding time to volunteer at a soup kitchen or charitable organization, even though you may feel stressed out and overscheduled. Serving others is always a great morale booster. You can find comfort and tap into the real Christmas spirit by making a difference in the lives of those less fortunate.
- 🎁 **Remember** your loved ones in positive ways. Instead of feeling blue, find an active way to celebrate the memory of your loved ones. For instance, if you miss one or both of your parents, schedule a time to go with your siblings to your parent's favorite restaurant and give them a grand toast.
- 🎁 **Be vigilant** with your doses if you take medications. With hectic holiday schedules, it's easy to forget about your medications. Don't let it happen. Also, make certain that your refills are up-to-date.

Happy Holidays!

Calories are tiny creatures that live in your closet and sew your clothes a little bit tighter every night.

Pregnant Women Urged to Sing Babies Learn Language in the Womb

Pregnant moms singing to their unborn children create stronger bonds, according to new research. If a mother sings the same songs before and after childbirth, it has a calming effect on her newborn. A baby's sense of hearing is developed by the 16th week in a mother's womb.

"The powerful connection between sound/music and prenatal memory/learning has been revealed in formal experiments, parental observations, clinical records, and first person reports," states Music Therapist Giselle Whitwell, founder of the Center for Prenatal and Perinatal Music.

Studies show that everything affects a pregnant woman, not only drugs, alcohol, smoking and diet, but also strong emotions and thoughts, leaving a lasting imprint on the child and his future, said Whitwell. "This means that active parenting starts while the baby is still developing in the womb, at the moment of conception, whether we are conscious of it or not," she said. "Music...is most suitable for for the task of nurturing the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual development of the unborn baby."

Research finds that newborns respond to familiar music with a significant decrease in heart rate and movements. They react with focus, rapt attention and shift into a more alert state when hearing music learned in the womb.

It turns out that bursting into song is also good for expecting moms. Breathing is the foundation of singing and plays a major role in birthing techniques. Singing helps moms control and slow their breathing, which can be good practice for the process of labor. Plus, when moms sing, they release more endorphins and serotonin, the happy hormones.

