

Keeping your health and wellbeing in the know

# MyHealth TALK

December 2013  
Courtesy of Asset Health

*Happy  
Holidays!*



## Safe Toys, Safer Children

December is Safe Toys and Gifts Month, and there are things to be aware of if you are shopping for toys for little ones. A recent report by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) found that throughout the U.S., hospital emergency rooms treated 251,700 toy-related injuries in 2010.

There are federal regulations in place to try and ensure safety in children's toys, but parents should still be vigilant in selecting appropriately among the toys available. Look for labels that indicate which age group is appropriate for the toy. Be sure to always read the label for proper assembly and usage instructions.

Look online for more information about what to look for in safe toys. You can check the CPSC and Prevent Blindness websites for tips. If you are accepting hand-me-down toys, be sure that they have not been recalled and that they meet the latest safety guidelines.

It won't be long before you cross everything off your holiday shopping list, so do your part this season by taking safety precautions and reviewing important toy safety information. Make this Christmas a fun and safe one for you and your children!

### Some safety hazards include:

- Plastic film or coverings
- Straps or strings
- Small magnets
- Balloons
- Shooting or flying parts
- Sharp edges
- Fragility

[preventblindness.org](http://preventblindness.org), [cpsc.gov](http://cpsc.gov), [fisher-price.com](http://fisher-price.com)



## WASH UP THE RIGHT WAY

Cold and flu season is in full swing. Combine the cold weather with holiday shopping crowds, and it's the perfect time to pick up germs. Research shows that the flu virus can live for up to 72 hours on surfaces like doorknobs, light switches, and TV remote controls.



The first week of December is National Handwashing Awareness Week. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one of the best ways to decrease the number of germs on your hands is to wash them with water and soap. If soap and water are not available, the CDC recommends using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.

### CDC's Hand-washing Technique:

- Soak your hands with warm or cold, clean running water and then apply soap.
- Create a lather by rubbing your hands together. Scrub them well, making sure that you don't miss the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
- Continue rubbing your hands for at least 20 seconds.
- Beneath running water, rinse your hands thoroughly.
- Use a clean towel or air dry your hands.

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

"How to combat the latest supergerms," Ginny Graves, [www.cnn.com/health](http://www.cnn.com/health), July 7, 2009.

# The Benefits of *Healthy Baking*

As you begin to prepare your favorite holiday recipes this season, it can be easy to overlook the amount of fat, salt, sugar and calories that they contain. Making some simple substitutions in your recipes can benefit your health and the health of those you are serving.

Solid fats and sugars together contribute about 800 calories daily to the average American diet, according to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010. Research suggests that decreasing the intake of solid fats and added sugars not only ensures that you don't outdo the normal calorie intake, but also permits the increased consumption of foods that actually contain nutrients.

To make healthier recipes, you can try replacing bread crumbs with rolled oats, butter with applesauce, sugar with nutmeg, cream cheese with low-fat cottage cheese and whole eggs with two egg whites. You can find a complete guide to simple ingredient substitutions at [mayoclinic.com/health](http://mayoclinic.com/health). Not only will you keep your recipe's flavor and enjoyment, but you also benefit from adding ingredients from your own pantry.

Need some tips when it comes to baking and substitutions? Check out the Betty Crocker website at [www.bettycrocker.com](http://www.bettycrocker.com).

Start off gradually and remember, you can find plenty of baking alternatives to make your recipes healthier.



## — Maximize the — Health Benefits of *Fresh Herbs and Spices*

While you are adding nutrient-rich baking substitutions to your recipes, consider adding herbs and spices to all of your holiday cooking. Substitute fresh spices and herbs in place of store-bought seasonings, which often contain preservatives and added sodium.

Try adding a dash of cinnamon to a dessert or beverage. Cinnamon is good for people with type 2 diabetes. It decreases blood sugar, triglycerides, LDL, and total cholesterol. Rosemary on vegetables or meat can help prevent damage to the blood vessels that raise heart attack risk as well as end gene mutations that could lead to cancer.

If you are looking for something different, try adding a pinch of turmeric, which has the ability to prevent the growth of cancer cells. You could also try paprika in your recipe for anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects that might decrease the risk of cancer. Ginger is good for nausea and could prevent blood clotting.

You can enhance the flavors of your recipes with fresh herbs and spices and improve the health of you and those you serve!

"Spice of Life: Health Benefits of Spices and Herbs," Anna Roufous, [fitnessmagazine.com](http://fitnessmagazine.com), accessed November 14, 2013.

"Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010," U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, [health.gov/dietaryguidelines](http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines), December 2010.

