Dear parent or caregiver,

Although the summer was not our hottest in recent history, it still seemed very long this year. We’re thankful for the transition to the cooler temperatures and the upcoming holiday season. We always look forward to celebrating during these months, usually with special meals and a variety of activities. This can be a wonderful, miraculous and exciting time of year. We also want it to be a healthy time of year in every way. Enjoy the season with nutritious food, plenty of rest and exercise and a spending budget you won’t regret in January. Keep this season simple and enjoy more time with family and friends in a less stressful and materialistic way.

This issue has some helpful tips for families to avoid the unhealthy traps of the holidays and some winter activities for the children in your household. Jose Gonzales, M.D., medical director for The Center for Children’s Health, also shares a few words in this issue. And as always, there’s a chance for your children to win a prize.

Don’t forget to get your flu shot, so you can make the most of school breaks and vacations to spend quality time with your friends and family. We wish you a joyful holiday season and an even healthier and happier New Year!

Warm wishes,

Larry Tubb
Executive Director
The Center for Children’s Health

Jackie Meeks
Director of Community Health Research
The Center for Children’s Health

Our Promise
Knowing that every child’s life is sacred, it is the Promise of Cook Children’s to improve the health of every child in our region through the prevention and treatment of illness, disease and injury.

To subscribe to this newsletter electronically, please send an email to thecenter@cookchildrens.org with the subject line “Subscribe to Health links.”
Tips on having a stress-free and healthy holiday season

Most holidays are filled with talk about joy, family and happiness. However, holidays also can be one of the most stressful times of the year.

So what can be done to survive another holiday season? With the practical tips and stress management suggestions below, you can challenge the season’s hectic schedule.

1. Stay real.
No family gathering is perfect and expecting perfection may lead to disappointment. We’re always going to wish something went better or differently, instead, “stay real” by enjoying time with loved ones and not worrying about everything going “perfectly.” Look toward a bigger picture, which is time with family and friends.

2. Planning is key.
Plan ahead, plan details and plan for change. With work, kids, a spouse, friends and extended family all in the mix, planning ahead is critical. Set aside days to shop for food, gifts and preparation. Plan details about which person is bringing a dish and what time to arrive. It’s OK to suggest that no one should arrive at your party before you’re ready. Plan for change; remember to stay relaxed and go with the flow if plans do change.

3. Stay within your financial means.
Having a great holiday does not mean overspending on food and gifts, despite what all of the holiday advertisements suggest. Set a budget for buying food and talk with your family about the amount of money to spend on gifts. Some of the best gifts are ones that come from the heart, yet cost very little. Agree to have one homemade gift or plan to share a fun family memory instead of giving a gift.

4. Say no.
As any parent knows, children say “no” all the time. As we become adults, we forget how to say “no,” which can mean overwhelming ourselves with too many commitments. Family, friends and coworkers will understand if you don’t participate in everything. If you can’t say “no,” then plan to adjust your time in other areas. If you have to work late, don’t expect to pick the kids up from school, prepare dinner and get homework done. Leave room for unexpected activities in the holiday months.

5. Live healthy and stay healthy.
Don’t let healthy habits go on vacation during the holidays. Plan to have healthy snacks available, and a mindset not to overindulge. Try the pairing method. If you are going to eat a sweet item, eat a healthy item first then have the sweet treat. For quick and easy snack ideas, visit cookchildrens.org/checkup and look for the Checkup Kitchen.

6. Build in time outs.
Remember to take time out for relaxing. Set a reminder on your phone or calendar to take five to ten minutes a day to sit in a quiet place and relax. Let your mind relax and try not to think about what you have to do until the five minutes have passed. Small steps go a long way to managing holiday season stress.

7. Remember those who are not with you.
If someone close to you has passed away, or you are not able to be with family and friends, take a moment to think about them. Remember that feelings of sadness and grief are normal. It’s necessary and “OK” to think about them, to cry and express your feelings. The holiday season is an emotional time and feeling lonely can be a normal part of the season.

Parents — Pull this section out and give it to your kids.

Kids, this section just for you!

As the holidays get closer, you’ll get more and more excited to spend time with your family and get a break from school. And with school being out, you’ll have more free time to help Mom and Dad get your home ready for the holidays.

Here are some ways you can help out your parents:

1) Help with chores. Washing dishes, sweeping, vacuuming and folding clothes are a big help.
2) Follow directions. If an adult asks for something, try to do it as soon as they ask.
3) Clean your room. It’ll really surprise everyone if your room stays clean all through the holidays.
4) Complete homework and studying. If you have homework due in November or December, finish it with plenty of time to spare. That way you won’t have to wait until the last minute during the holiday season.
5) Stay positive. Your family will be extra busy this time of year, and you might have to go shopping and do grown-up things that are not fun. Stay positive and you will most likely be rewarded.

YOU COULD WIN A PRIZE!

Complete the snow man puzzle in this insert and mail it to this address to be entered to win a cool prize:
Cook Children’s
The Center for Children’s Health
801 7th Ave.
Fort Worth, TX 76104
Do it yourself holiday wreath

Materials:
- 1 sheet of colored 8.5 inches x 11 inches construction paper – this will be the main part of your wreath
- 12 inches to 24 inches of ribbon
- Scissors
- Markers, sequins, glitter or anything else you want to use to decorate your wreath and make it truly unique

Step 1. Complete the seven math problems below
Step 2. Connect the dots to complete the picture.

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8. Plan to be around others. If you feel isolated or alone, surround yourself with others during the holidays. Look for social events, community activities and volunteer opportunities. Instead of focusing on your solo status, share your time by working at a community food outreach center or doing something that appeals to you.

9. Leave it to professionals. If you've experienced tough holiday blues and stress in the past, consider visiting a counselor or mental health professional. Help is available. Talk to your doctor about visiting a counselor, psychologist or psychiatrist. Consider adding additional appointments during the holiday season, if you already see a mental health professional.

Children experience stress and sadness during the holidays as well. Their schedules are altered, diets become less healthy and too much attention is given to gift getting AND gift giving. Here are three suggestions to try with your child throughout the season.

1. End each day with a reminder of a blessing.
2. Make some gifts together as a family or give the gift of time (going to a movie or playtime).
3. Get active. Go for a walk after dinner or rake the leaves and take time to play in them at the same time.

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Holiday spice cookies recipe

**Ingredients**

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- 2 tsp ground ginger
- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp nutmeg
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 1/4 tsp ground cloves
- 1/4 cup packed light brown sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1/2 cup applesauce
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar

**Preparation**

1. Preheat oven to 350°. In a medium bowl, whisk together the flours, ginger, baking soda, cinnamon, salt, nutmeg, black pepper and cloves.
2. Using an electric mixer, beat the margarine and brown sugar on medium-high speed until fluffy, for about 2 to 3 minutes. Reduce speed to low and beat in the egg, applesauce and vanilla. Add the flour mixture, mixing just until combined.
3. Place the granulated sugar on a plate. Roll the dough into balls. Roll the balls in the sugar to coat. Place on parchment-lined baking sheets, spacing them 2 inches apart.
4. Using a water glass, press the balls to a 3/8-inch thickness and sprinkle with more granulated sugar.
5. Bake, rotating the sheets halfway through baking, until the edges are firm, about 10 to 12 minutes. Cool slightly on the baking sheets. Transfer to wire racks to cool completely.
6. Store the cookies in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 5 days.

Yield: 42 cookies

**Nutritional Information**

- Serving size: 1 cookie
- Calories: 55
- Fat: 2 g
- Saturated fat: 0
- Cholesterol: 4 mg
- Sodium: 20 mg
- Carbohydrates: 8 g
- Fiber: 0
- Protein: 1 g

For more healthy eating ideas, visit cookchildrens.org/checkup and look for the link to our Checkup Kitchen.
A message from our medical director

Winter and the holidays will soon be here, along with delicious cakes and pies to eat while sitting by the fire watching the snow fall. Well, because we live in central Texas, do not dwell too much on a cold winter or the chances for a white Christmas. BUT, remember that those tasty goodies will be around to tempt you when you least expect it. So, eat them only in moderation and take advantage of our cool Texas “winters” to go outside and stay active. Eat wise and be healthy.

Happy holidays,

Jose G. Gonzalez, M.D.
Medical Director
The Center for Children’s Health