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Wellness Matters

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Good Health

Ease Your Holiday Stress

The holidays can be a major source of stress for many Americans. Top holiday stressors include staying on a budget, managing multiple commitments, and finding the perfect gifts. And if COVID-19 transmission is high in your community, you may also be feeling worried about your own and your loved ones' health. Consider the following to help reduce your holiday stress.

Coping Tips

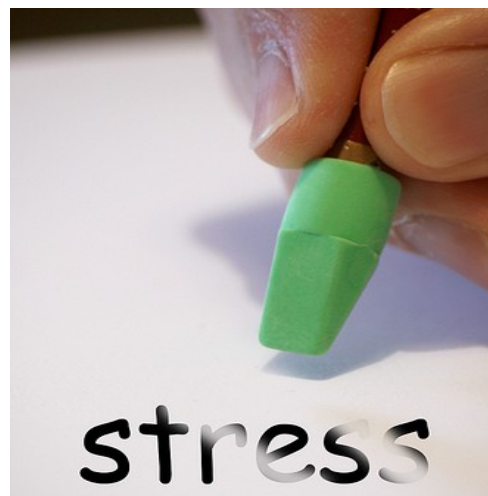
Get organized. Finalize your plans—including gatherings, shopping days, family pictures, and baking days—and put them on the calendar. If you haven't already, get started on compiling wish lists and shopping lists.

Keep up healthy habits. Try to do something active every day, keep healthy snacks on hand, limit alcohol use, and get at least seven hours of sleep each night. Remember to take time for yourself as well.

Don't say "yes" to everything. Choose a handful of meaningful

activities or events and skip the rest. It's important not to stretch yourself too thin or commit to gatherings you're not comfortable with amid the pandemic.

Stick to a budget. If you're stressed about how your holiday spending will impact you after the celebrations are over, you're not



alone. Remember, the sentiment of a gift is much more important than the cost. Set a realistic budget and don't exceed it.

Pandemic Safety

A new variant of coronavirus initially detected in South Africa is prompting renewed pandemic

concerns. Omicron was labeled a "variant of concern," the agency's most serious category for tracking. Such a designation is reserved for dangerous variants that may be more transmissible or virulent or could decrease the effectiveness of vaccines or treatments.

Epidemiologists are racing to learn more about omicron as, at this moment, there is too little research available to draw conclusions or provide recommendations. Omicron's genetic makeup is unique from other circulating coronavirus variants and carries a large number of mutations.

In the meantime, health experts urge Americans to continue to take proper precautions. Don't stress—be proactive instead; get your COVID-19 booster, mask up, and social distance. Practical steps like these will help ease your stress and worry.

Good Hand Hygiene

Good hand hygiene is the best way to prevent the spread of germs. Health experts estimate that 80% of common infections are spread through hand contact.

Make Clean Choices

In today's busy world it is not always possible, or convenient, for us to wash our hands as often as needed. When you can't get to a sink, experts recommend you use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. While soap and water are ideal when your hands are visibly dirty, hand sanitizers are fast-acting and can significantly reduce the germs on your skin.

Wash with Soap and Water

Remember that water simply rinses dirt and germs away; soap is what actually prevents them from sticking to your skin.

For best results, wet your hands with clean running water and apply soap. Rub hands together, lathering and scrubbing all surfaces for at least 20 seconds. Rinse your hands well under running water; dry with a paper towel or air dryer. When in a public bathroom, use your paper towel to open the door.

Use a Hand Sanitizer

Evidence shows that hand sanitizers are more effective than soap in preventing infection, less irritating to the skin, and faster and easier to use. The main ingredient in hand sanitizers is alcohol, which kills 99.99% of bacteria in about 15 seconds. Contrary to popular belief, frequent use of a hand sanitizer will not cause antibacterial resistance.

Cleanse Your Hands Often

Cleaning your hands often helps prevent you from getting sick plus it helps you from getting others sick. Wash with soap and water or a hand sanitizer after:

- Blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- Going to the bathroom
- Changing diapers
- Handling animals or animal waste
- Handling garbage



Healthy & Nutritious New Year, New Diet?

January 1 signals a new calendar year, and for many Americans, a “new year, new me” mentality. In fact, according to Business Insider, getting in shape is consistently the most popular New Year’s resolution in the United States. While making lifestyle changes approved by a doctor is not a bad thing, turning to a fad diet to achieve a resolution of getting in shape is not ideal or healthy.

According to the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, fad diets promise quick weight loss through usually unhealthy and unbalanced dieting. Fad diets can lead to things like gout, poor athleticism, heart disease, and—ironically—poor, long-term weight-loss control. Instead, make healthier lifestyle changes like portion control, added exercise, avoiding empty calories, and eating a well-balanced diet. Be sure to get the recommended daily dose of nutrients through fruits, vegetables, grains, protein, and dairy to feel your best.

Keep in mind that forming healthy dieting practices now will keep you on track with your long-term weight-loss goal.