12 Ways to a Healthy Christmas

Wash your hands often.
Nobody likes being sick during the holidays. Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps you can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based product.

Stay warm.
Cold temperatures can cause serious health problems, especially in infants and older adults. Stay dry, and dress warmly in several layers of loose-fitting, tightly woven clothing.

Get check-ups and vaccinations.
Exams and screenings can help find problems before they start. Vaccinations help prevent diseases and save lives. Schedule a visit with your health care provider for a yearly exam. Ask what vaccinations and tests you should get based on your age, lifestyle, travel plans, medical history, and family health history.

Travel safely.
Whether you're traveling across town or around the world, help ensure your trip is safe. Don't drink and drive, and don't let someone else drink and drive. Wear a seat belt every time you drive or ride in a motor vehicle. Always buckle your child in the car using a child safety seat, booster seat, or seat belt according to his/her height, weight, and age.

Manage stress.
The holidays can be busy and sometimes stressful, but it shouldn’t take a toll on your health. Keep a check on over-commitment and over-spending. Balance work, home, and play. Keep a relaxed and positive outlook. Enjoy the season!

Watch the Kids.
Children are at high risk for injuries that can lead to death or disability. Keep a watchful eye on your kids while they’re playing. Keep potentially dangerous household items, toys, food, drinks, and choking hazards (like Christmas ornaments, decorations, and hard candy) out of kids' reach. Learn how to provide early treatment for children who are choking. Make sure toys are used properly.

Prevent injuries.
Injuries can occur anywhere and some often occur around the holidays. Use step stools instead of furniture when hanging decorations. Most residential fires occur during the winter months. Leave the fireworks to the professionals. Keep candles away from children, trees, and curtains. Never leave stoves, candles, or fireplaces, unattended. Don't use generators or grills inside your home or garage. Install a smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector in your home and test them regularly.
Handle and prepare food safely.
As you prepare holiday meals, keep you and your family safe from food-related illness. Wash hands and surfaces often. Avoid cross-contamination by keeping raw meat, seafood, poultry, and eggs away from ready-to-eat foods and eating surfaces. Cook foods to the proper temperature. Refrigerate promptly. Do not leave perishable foods out for more than two hours.

Eat healthy and be active.
With balance and moderation, you can enjoy the holidays the healthy way. Choose fruit as a sweet substitute for candy. Select just one or two of your favorites from the host of tempting foods. Find fun ways to stay active, such as dancing to your favorite holiday music. Adults should be active for at least 2½ hours a week; kids and teens for at least 1 hour a day.

Be smoke-free.
Avoid smoking and breathing other people's smoke. If you smoke, quit today! Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW or talk to your health care provider for help.

Take care of your pets.
Keep your pets healthy by making regular visits to the vet and keeping vaccinations up-to-date. Remember, healthy pets = healthy people! There are many health benefits of owning a pet. The companionship of pets can help manage loneliness and depression. Pets can also increase your opportunities to exercise, participate in outdoor activities, and socialize with others.

Kitchen Safety

Keep your holidays injury-free with important kitchen safety tips from Safe Kids Bear River

As the holiday season approaches, cooking as a family is a great way to make lasting memories. Children can safely help out in the kitchen too, but parents must pick the right tasks for each child’s age and skill level.

Parents and caregivers should check for preventable hazards before their children enter the kitchen, and they should supervise their children at all times while they’re in the kitchen. Simply being in the same room as a child is not necessarily supervising. An actively supervised child is in sight and in reach at all times.

Burns, such as those from spills, steam, hot surfaces or a flame, can be especially devastating injuries. Young children have much thinner skin than adults do, and therefore burn more severely and at lower temperatures. Thermal burns from contact with a hot surface or a flame cause the greatest number of burns in children. However, children ages 4 and under are hospitalized in burn centers more for scald burns from hot liquids, while children ages 5 to 15 are hospitalized more for fire and flame burns.
Children who can follow directions may be ready to help out in the kitchen with tasks that do not involve knives, appliances or heat. You know your own children. Don’t give them knives or let them handle anything hot until they have shown the maturity and the coordination to do it safely. Some children mature faster than others, so it’s up to parents to use good judgment about each child’s capabilities.

Safe Kids Bear River recommends these precautions against kitchen burns:

* Never leave a hot stove unattended. (Unattended food on the stove is the number one cause of home fires.)

* Never hold a child while cooking or carrying hot items.

* Cook on back burners whenever possible, and turn all handles toward the back of the stove.

* Don’t allow loose-fitting clothing in the kitchen.

* Keep hot foods and liquids away from the edges of counters and tables. Be especially careful around tablecloths — children can pull hot dishes down onto themselves.

* Tie up electrical cords of small appliances. A toddler playing with a dangling cord can pull a toaster or microwave down from a countertop.

For more information about kitchen safety during the holidays visit www.brhd.org.

*Safe Kids Bear River works to prevent unintentional childhood injury, the leading cause of death and disability to children ages 1 to 14. Safe Kids Bear River is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing unintentional injury.*