

# HEALTH MATTERS

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## Tips For Keeping Safe, Happy, And Healthy This Year

**F**or many people, the start of the new year is a time for all the extras – extended family, overindulgence, parties and trips, and an unhealthy helping of stress. In the middle of the chaos, there are plenty of ways to enjoy the wonderful moments while staying healthy and happy. Use these tips this winter and all year to stay healthy.

### Mindful Wellness Strategies

Not everyone enjoys the hustle and bustle of the new year. Packed stores, visiting family, and money woes add anxiety. Managing stress is essential for maintaining good mental health. If stress becomes overwhelming, seek professional support from a mental health professional.

Take time for yourself amidst the hustle and bustle. Schedule moments for self-care, whether it's reading a book, taking a walk, practicing mindfulness, or enjoying a warm bath. Make self-care a priority to recharge your mental and emotional well-being.

While it's important to set boundaries, maintaining social connections is crucial for mental health. Spend time with loved ones, share your feelings, and seek support when needed. Connecting with others can provide a sense of belonging and reduce feelings of isolation.

Take a moment each day to reflect on the positive aspects of your life. Expressing gratitude can shift your focus away from stressors and foster a more positive mindset. Consider keeping a gratitude journal to document things you are thankful for, no matter how small.

### Stay Heart Healthy

During the holiday season, particularly between Christmas Eve and New Year's Day, individuals with heart disease or those at high risk of heart-related issues experience a higher incidence of heart attacks compared to other times of the year. Promptly contact your doctor or call 911 and go to the emergency room if you experience any unusual signs or symptoms indicating a potential heart condition.

Holiday traditions and family time can induce stress, impacting well-being and increasing heart disease risk. Manage stress by avoiding overcommitment, declining invitations when necessary, seeking help, and incorporating activities like short walks, deep breathing, yoga, or meditation for effective anxiety relief.

Excessive alcohol harms heart health, causing irregular heartbeat. Moderation is crucial, as binge drinking disrupts cardiac rhythm, even in those without pre-existing conditions.

Exercise not only alleviates anxiety but also regulates appetite hormones, lowers blood pressure, increases 'good' cholesterol, and supports overall well-being. Aim for 30 minutes of brisk movement at least five days a week, breaking it into 10-minute chunks. Consult your doctor before starting a new exercise program.

### Healthy Habits

Winter is the season for influenza, COVID, and RSV. Get ahead of any booster shots and keep an eye on the news.

Prioritize getting your immunization or booster shot before trips or big family gatherings to ensure an optimal immune response. The protection gained typically lasts for at least two months, reducing the risk of flu, COVID, and RSV transmission.

Stay updated on local COVID levels and follow CDC recommendations, especially in high-risk areas. Wearing masks not only helps prevent COVID transmission but also safeguards against RSV and flu, particularly beneficial when hosting or attending events with immunocompromised or elderly individuals.

Reestablish the habit of regular handwashing to prevent the spread of infections. Despite improvements in the pandemic situation, thorough handwashing remains an effective measure against flu, COVID, and RSV during the holiday season.

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