



# BalanceHealth<sup>SM</sup> Newsletter

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## Staying Healthy During the Holiday Season

During the holidays we want to feel our best. However, people are notoriously run down throughout the holiday season thanks to lack of sleep, added stress, numerous gatherings and family obligations, and over-indulging in delicious holiday treats.

Luckily there are many proactive steps we can take to reduce the risk of falling ill.

### *Protect Yourself*

The flu is most prevalent during the winter months, making the holidays a prime time for the virus to strike. Typical flu symptoms include fever, stuffy nose, sore throat, cough, headache, chills, body aches, and fatigue, all of which would certainly put a damper on the holiday season.

The best way to protect against the flu virus is to get the flu vaccine. There are many different strains of flu virus, however the vaccine protects against the three viruses that researchers have determined will be the most common in the upcoming season. The flu vaccine is comprised of the inactivated viruses. This means that the vaccine contains flu viruses that have been killed, so there is absolutely no chance that you can catch the flu from getting vaccinated.

The CDC recommends that everyone over 6 months old be vaccinated once per year. It

is especially important that those who are at risk for serious medical complications from the flu get vaccinated. These high risk groups include children, pregnant women, people over the age of 65, people with chronic respiratory conditions, and people with suppressed immune systems.

It should be noted that the flu vaccine is grown in eggs, so people who are allergic to eggs should not get vaccinated. In addition, anyone who has previously had an allergic reaction or developed Guillain-Barre syndrome after receiving the flu shot should not attempt to get vaccinated. If you have a fever, doctors advise that you wait to get the flu shot until after your fever subsides. Besides these isolated circumstances, the risk of serious complications from receiving the flu vaccine is very small. The side effects, if any are experienced at all, tend to be very mild. Remember the flu vaccine is extremely safe; the vast majority of people who receive the vaccine experience no serious problems from it.

### *Limit Exposure to Germs*

During the holiday season we spend a great deal of time in crowded shopping centers, at holiday gatherings shaking hands and hugging loved ones, and us-

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**1.800.327.2255**

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ing public transportation to spend time with family. This makes it nearly impossible to avoid people who are under the weather. Although you may be surrounded by germs, you can reduce the risk of becoming sick. Wash your hands often, especially before you eat. When out in public try to avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth to prevent germs from entering your body. Use antibacterial wipes to disinfect communal surfaces such as shopping cart handles, or airplane armrests and tray tables.

### *Stay Hydrated*

All the running around during the holidays can leave us dehydrated so remember to drink lots of water. In addition, water helps kidneys rid the body of toxins, which is especially important over the holidays when there is a greater temptation to over-imbibe. Finally, staying well-hydrated keeps mucous membranes moist so they can better keep bugs out of our systems.

### *Maintain a Healthy Diet*

There is nothing wrong with thoroughly enjoying Thanksgiving dinner, indulging in a few cookies at the office holiday party, or having a couple of glasses of your cousin's homemade eggnog. However, as there is a well established link between nutrition and health, there are strategies we can utilize to mitigate all the indulgence that accompanies the holidays.

Eat a light and healthy snack before heading to holiday celebrations. This will make you less likely to overindulge on all the sweets and treats at the party. If you do overeat at one meal, simply go light at the next meal. For example, if you LOVE Thanksgiving dinner and want to indulge, just be sure to eat a light breakfast and lunch. At holiday buffets fill your plate with the foods you love

and skip those that are just OK. There is no need to eat something just because it's there! Also, be sure to include some healthy choices like fruits and veggies on your plate. Finally, eat just enough of scrumptious foods like pies and cookies to savor the taste.

### *Rest Up & De-Stress*

If you run yourself ragged and don't get enough sleep, you will wear down your body's natural defenses and increase your risk of becoming ill. In fact, a study in the Archives of Internal Medicine found that people who slept at least eight hours nightly were about three times less likely to catch a cold than those who snoozed for less than seven.

Therefore, don't feel obligated to attend every celebration you're invited to. Accepting all invitations may leave you exhausted and stressed. If you are feeling overwhelmed it's perfectly acceptable to politely decline. Finally, leave time to de-stress. Pick something you enjoy that keeps you calm and centered and practice it for a few minutes every day. Try yoga, meditation, reading, writing in a journal, taking a walk or cuddling with a pet. Anything that makes you happy and calms your nerves will work!

***From developing a healthy eating plan to brainstorming strategies to de-stress, your wellness coach is available to help keep you healthy this holiday season.***

### *Happy Holidays!*

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