

# Road to **WELLfluent**<sup>TM</sup>

Embrace better health.

## Stress, depression and the holidays: Tips for coping

### By Mayo Clinic Staff

*Stress and depression can ruin your holidays and hurt your health. Being realistic, planning ahead and seeking support can help ward off stress and depression.*

The holiday season often brings unwelcome guests — stress and depression. And it's no wonder. The holidays often present a dizzying array of demands — cooking meals, shopping, baking, cleaning and entertaining, to name just a few. And if coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is spreading in your community, you may be feeling additional stress, or you may be worrying about you and your loved ones' health. You may also feel stressed, sad or anxious because your holiday plans may look different during the COVID-19 pandemic.

But with some practical tips, you can minimize the stress that accompanies the holidays. You may even end up enjoying the holidays more than you thought.

### Tips to prevent holiday stress and depression

When stress is at its peak, it's hard to stop and regroup. Try to prevent stress and depression in the first place, especially if the holidays have taken an emotional toll on you in the past.

**1. Acknowledge your feelings.** If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones for other reasons, realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief. It's OK to take time to cry or express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.



**2. Reach out.** If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community, religious or other social events or communities. Many may have websites, online support groups, social media sites or virtual events. They can offer support and companionship.

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If you're feeling stress during the holidays, it also may help to talk to a friend or family member about your concerns. Try reaching out with a text, a call or a video chat.

Volunteering your time or doing something to help others also is a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships. For example, consider dropping off a meal and dessert at a friend's home during the holidays.

- 3. Be realistic.** The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Choose a few to hold on to, and be open to creating new ones. For example, if your adult children or other relatives can't come to your home, find new ways to celebrate together, such as sharing pictures, emails or videos. Or meet virtually on a video call. Even though your holiday plans may look different this year, you can find ways to celebrate.
- 4. Set aside differences.** Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all of your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion. And be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes awry. Chances are they're feeling the effects of holiday stress and depression, too.
- 5. Stick to a budget.** Before you do your gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts.

Try these alternatives:

- o Donate to a charity in someone's name.
- o Give homemade gifts.
- o Start a family gift exchange.

- 6. Plan ahead.** Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, connecting with friends and other activities. Consider whether you can shop online for any of your items. Plan your menus and then make your shopping list. That'll help prevent last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten ingredients. And make sure to line up help for meal prep and cleanup.
- 7. Learn to say no.** Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity. If it's not possible to say no when your boss asks you to work overtime, try to remove something else from your agenda to

make up for the lost time.

- 8. Don't abandon healthy habits.** Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt.

Try these suggestions:

- o Have a healthy snack before holiday meals so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese or drinks.
- o Eat healthy meals.
- o Get plenty of sleep.
- o Include regular physical activity in your daily routine.
- o Try deep-breathing exercises, meditation or yoga.
- o Avoid excessive tobacco, alcohol and drug use.
- o Be aware of how the information culture can produce undue stress, and adjust the time you spend reading news and social media as you see fit.

- 9. Take a breather.** Make some time for yourself. Find an activity you enjoy. Take a break by yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring inner calm.

Some options may include:

- o Taking a walk at night and stargazing
- o Listening to soothing music
- o Reading a book

- 10. Seek professional help if you need it.**

Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to sleep, irritable and hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for a while, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional.

### Take control of the holidays

Don't let the holidays become something you dread. Instead, take steps to prevent the stress and depression that can descend during the holidays. Learn to recognize your holiday triggers, such as financial pressures or personal demands, so you can combat them before they lead to a meltdown. With a little planning and some positive thinking, you can find peace and joy during the holidays.

Source: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress/art-20047544>

Getting a flu vaccine can reduce your risk of getting flu and help save scarce medical resources needed to care for people with COVID-19. It's important for everyone to do their part to stay healthy this flu season. Prevent the spread of flu and other respiratory illnesses:

- Mask Up: Cover your nose and mouth with a mask when out in public.
- Lather Up: Wash your hands frequently with soap and water.
- Sleeve Up: Roll up your sleeve to get a flu shot.

The more people vaccinated against flu, the more people protected from flu. Learn more: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/season/protect-your-health.html>

# MASK UP, LATHER UP, SLEEVE UP



# Happy Holidays

On behalf of all of us at AvMed, best wishes for Peace & Joy this Holiday Season. We hope the New Year brings you happiness, good health and prosperity; and we wish you and your family the very best in 2021!

# How to Prevent Cancer Starting Today

## UPDATED ACS GUIDELINES, ARTICLE / NOV 2, 2020

If there was something you could do to lower your chances of developing cancer, would you do it? The American Cancer Society (ACS) has updated its guidelines on diet and physical activity for cancer prevention, and you can start applying its recommendations right away.

The ACS states that "Cancer is the second leading cause of death in both men and women in the United States behind only heart disease." We encourage you to take action in protecting yourself and your loved ones with the summarized recommendations in this article and in the full report here.

According to the ACS, at least 18% of all cancer cases in the US are related to excess body weight, physical inactivity, excess alcohol consumption, and/or poor nutrition.

Along with not using tobacco products, our daily choices can make a very big difference in the long run. Here's an overview of the updated ACS guidelines to help you adjust your lifestyle as needed.

exceeding the 300 minutes is ideal). Children and teenagers should get at least 1 hour of moderate or vigorous intensity activity each day. If you're not used to this level of activity, the amount and intensity of activity can be increased slowly over time.



### Following a Healthy Eating Pattern

Eat foods that are high in nutrients, a variety of vegetables (dark green, red and orange), fiber-rich legumes (beans and peas), fruits in a variety of colors and whole grains. Plus, limit or avoid

processed meats, added sugar like in sugar-sweetened beverages, and highly processed foods and refined grain products.



### Stay at a Healthy Weight

Keep your weight within a healthy range and avoid gaining weight as an adult. Obesity is linked to several types of cancer. Being overweight or obese is largely due to consuming too

many calories and not burning enough of them.



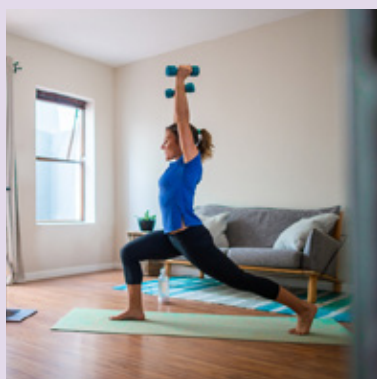
### Avoid or Limit Alcohol

It is best not to drink alcohol, or limit it as much as possible.

While the above gives only a glimpse of the updated guidelines on diet and physical activity for cancer prevention, this

summary can get you started on the right path.

Our decisions today, can help us live a healthy tomorrow.



### Stay Active Throughout Life

The ACS recommends 150-300 minutes of moderate intensity or 75-150 minutes of vigorous intensity activity (and suggests that



# home **or** gym?

## we'll keep you active either way.

### Enrollment Fee Waived Through December 31, 2020

- Access **1,500+** digital workout videos so you can work out at home or on-the-go
- Select from **11,000+** fitness centers and studios, with the ability to change anytime
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### NEW! Two ways to try fitness for free.

- ▶ Enjoy **200 free digital workout videos** available to all eligible members, even before you enroll.
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**Get Started:** Visit your Member Portal at [www.AvMed.org/Login](http://www.AvMed.org/Login) and click on "Services & Programs" to learn more.

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