

Doctors' Voice

December 2015

Christmas – tips to reduce the stress



Christmas can be a stressful time. The expense of buying gifts, the pressure of last minute shopping and the heightened expectations of family togetherness can all combine to undermine our best intentions. Some practical suggestions to help you reduce your 'Christmas stress'.

- **Budgeting for Christmas** – plan ahead to avoid a massive credit card bill that can take months to clear. Work out a rough budget of expected costs and start saving as early as possible.
- **Presents** – it can become very costly to buy presents for a large circle of extended family or friends. Consider altering the way your family and friends give presents. Alternatives include: Purchase only for the children; Enter into a family 'Kris Kringle' and purchase only for one person; Set a limit on the cost of gifts for each other.
- **Christmas shopping** – plan your shopping expedition and make a list of gifts you wish to purchase. To avoid duplication cross names off your list as you buy. Avoid crowds-shop early!
- **Food preparation** – preparing the meal can be enjoyable, but tiring and stressful. Don't forget to delegate tasks. You don't need to do everything yourself. Consider a buffet style meal where everybody brings a platter or why not dine at a restaurant (but you will need to book well ahead!)

Partying Safely – some tips to remember



Parties are fun for people of all ages, and this time of year sees an increase in social gatherings.

Tips for safe partying include:

- **Alcohol** - is a drug that affects people in different ways and is responsible for most drug-related deaths in the teenage population. Moderation is the key.
- **Drink driving** – there is no golden rule for how many drinks will take you over the legal limit for driving. Nominate a designated driver or share a taxi home with friends.
- **Drink spiking** – slipping alcohol or drugs into a friend's drink as a joke is against the law & may have serious consequences.
- **Safe partying** – don't advertise a party via SMS or the internet to limit the risk of gate-crashers and violent situation.



Christmas closure and altered opening times

This time of year may attract altered opening times for many health practices. Check with our Reception staff for this practice's operating hours during the Christmas and New Year period.



Physical activity: Staying motivated

Sticking to an exercise or physical activity routine can be difficult at this time of year. Pick an activity that appeals to you and suits your budget and lifestyle. Enlist a friend to join you. Motivate each other! Always consult with your doctor before beginning any new exercise program particularly if you are overweight, over 40 years, haven't exercised in a long time or have a chronic medical condition.

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Safe Food Handling and Storage

Tips for storing and handling food during the festive season

- Keep high-risk foods at 5°C or below, and above 60°C to avoid the temperature danger zone
- Store raw foods below cooked foods
- Store food in suitable, covered containers
- Avoid re-freezing thawed foods
- Check and observe the use-by dates on food products
- Take special care with high-risk foods

Storing food in the fridge

Your fridge temperature should be at 5 °C or below. The freezer temperature should be below -15 °C. Use a thermometer to check the temperature in your fridge

Freezing food safely

When shopping, buy chilled and frozen foods at the end of your trip and take them home to store as quickly as possible. On hot days or for trips longer than 30 minutes, try to take an insulated cooler bag or icepack to keep frozen foods cold. Keep hot and cold foods separate while you take them home. On arrival home, put chilled and frozen foods into the fridge or freezer immediately. Make sure foods stored in the freezer are frozen hard.

Storing cooked food safely

When you have cooked food and want to cool it:

- Put hot food into shallow dishes or smaller portions to help cool the food as quickly as possible.
- Don't put very hot food into the refrigerator. Wait until steam has stopped rising from the food before putting it in the fridge.

Store raw food separately from cooked food

Raw food and cooked food should be stored separately in the fridge. Bacteria from raw food can contaminate cold cooked food, and the bacteria can multiply to dangerous levels if the food is not cooked thoroughly again. Always store raw food in sealed or covered containers at the bottom of the fridge. Keep raw foods below cooked foods, to avoid liquid such as meat juices dripping down and contaminating the cooked food.

Avoid refreezing thawed food

Food-poisoning bacteria can grow in frozen food while it is thawing, so avoid thawing frozen food in the temperature danger zone. Keep defrosted food in the fridge until it is ready to be cooked. If using a microwave oven to defrost food, cook it immediately after defrosting.

Remember! - If in doubt, throw it out!

Throw out high-risk food left in the temperature danger zone for more than four hours – don't put it in the fridge and don't keep it for later. Check the use-by dates on food products and discard out-of-date food. If you are uncertain of the use-by date, throw it out.



Where to get help

- Food Safety Hotline
Tel. 1300 364 352
- Your local council health department

Source: Better Health Channel: Food Safety – storage