Holiday Wellness

Holidays Without Headaches

Does last-minute shopping in a hot, crowded mall make your head hurt? Read how to prevent holiday headaches.

As enjoyable as holiday planning may be, does it ever give you a headache? Between the shopping, the wrapping, the cooking, and the decorating, does holiday stress make your head throb?

According to a survey by the National Headache Foundation, over half of those polled admitted that they have an increase or worsening of their headache symptoms during the holiday season. Three very common triggers of headaches are stress, changes in sleep patterns, and exposure to smoke and perfume. These triggers are widespread during the holidays.

These tips may help you avoid holiday stress and a bad headache:

**Plan ahead.** If you are making travel arrangements, give yourself extra time to check your baggage, get through security, and find your gate. If you’re driving, allow extra time for traffic.

**Avoid marathon mall shopping.** If going in and out of one crowded store after another gives you headaches, don’t do it. Shop online or plan several short shopping trips instead of squeezing everything into one long day at the mall. Make a list of gifts you need to buy, and don’t wait until the last minute to buy them.

**Remember to eat.** You may get so caught up in your holiday shopping that you start skipping meals. Keep a healthy snack in your glove compartment or handbag.

**Get some fresh air.** Many holiday celebrations are held indoors in close quarters. Request that people not smoke in your home. Secondhand smoke is not good for anyone and is also a common headache trigger for many. The smell of perfume and cologne may also trigger headaches.
**Holiday Wellness**

**Drink only in moderation.** If you choose to drink, try blending alcohol with fruit juice instead of drinking it straight. Alternate alcoholic beverages with water or soda. Don’t drink red wine, which is a trigger for many. Try not to drink alcohol in the hours right before you go to bed. Limit yourself to one alcoholic beverage if you are a female and two if you are a male. And never drink and drive.

**Don’t stray from your normal sleep schedule.** Staying up later than usual and sleeping in the next day may cause headaches. Try your best to stick to your normal routine.

**Pamper yourself.** Give yourself some time alone to relax. Don’t feel like you have to make an appearance at every holiday party you’re invited to. Do as much socializing as you’re comfortable with, and spend the rest of your time with your loved ones or alone reading a good book.

**Remember the true meaning of the holidays.** Don’t put pressure on yourself to be the perfect decorator, party host, or gift giver. Let yourself enjoy preparing for the season instead of stressing over it. Stay within your budget and remember that your holiday is about spending time with your loved ones – not about putting yourself in debt.

**Talk to your doctor.** If you’re getting more headaches than you did before – or if they’re more intense – make an appointment to see your doctor.

---

**Not Feeling So Jolly? Help for the Holiday Blues**

Many people feel blue or sad during the holidays. These tips may help.

The holidays are supposed to be a time of joy and celebration. But for many people, the winter season is one of sadness or even depression. There are lots of reasons a person may get “holiday blues,” including:

- High levels of stress and anxiety
- Family conflicts
- Lack of a strong social network
- Loss of a loved one through death or divorce
- Financial pressures

If you’re in the throes of the holiday blues, here are some ideas that may help:

**Keep it simple.** Don’t let the demands of the holidays overwhelm you. You don’t have to find the perfect gift or whip up a gourmet meal. Trying to do too much will add to your stress. Do what you can manage. Ask for help if you need it.

**Spend time with people who support you.** Having people to confide in can help you deal with holiday blues. Organize small get-togethers with people who care about you.

**Take good care of yourself.** Holidays can really throw off your routines. That can create stress, and stress

---

**Drink only in moderation.** If you choose to drink, try blending alcohol with fruit juice instead of drinking it straight. Alternate alcoholic beverages with water or soda. Don’t drink red wine, which is a trigger for many. Try not to drink alcohol in the hours right before you go to bed. Limit yourself to one alcoholic beverage if you are a female and two if you are a male. And never drink and drive.

**Don’t stray from your normal sleep schedule.** Staying up later than usual and sleeping in the next day may cause headaches. Try your best to stick to your normal routine.

**Pamper yourself.** Give yourself some time alone to relax. Don’t feel like you have to make an appearance at every holiday party you’re invited to. Do as much socializing as you’re comfortable with, and spend the rest of your time with your loved ones or alone reading a good book.

**Remember the true meaning of the holidays.** Don’t put pressure on yourself to be the perfect decorator, party host, or gift giver. Let yourself enjoy preparing for the season instead of stressing over it. Stay within your budget and remember that your holiday is about spending time with your loved ones – not about putting yourself in debt.

**Talk to your doctor.** If you’re getting more headaches than you did before – or if they’re more intense – make an appointment to see your doctor.

---

**Not Feeling So Jolly? Help for the Holiday Blues**

Many people feel blue or sad during the holidays. These tips may help.

The holidays are supposed to be a time of joy and celebration. But for many people, the winter season is one of sadness or even depression. There are lots of reasons a person may get “holiday blues,” including:

- High levels of stress and anxiety
- Family conflicts
- Lack of a strong social network
- Loss of a loved one through death or divorce
- Financial pressures

If you’re in the throes of the holiday blues, here are some ideas that may help:

**Keep it simple.** Don’t let the demands of the holidays overwhelm you. You don’t have to find the perfect gift or whip up a gourmet meal. Trying to do too much will add to your stress. Do what you can manage. Ask for help if you need it.

**Spend time with people who support you.** Having people to confide in can help you deal with holiday blues. Organize small get-togethers with people who care about you.

**Take good care of yourself.** Holidays can really throw off your routines. That can create stress, and stress
can trigger or worsen depression. Be sure you get plenty of sleep and make time for regular exercise. Exercise is one of the best things you can do to improve your mood.

**Stick to a healthy diet.** It may be tempting to gorge on sweets and rich foods. Try not to go overboard. You’ll feel better and have more energy if you focus on healthy food choices and avoid excess sugar and caffeine.

**Limit alcohol.** Alcohol is a depressant, and if you are already feeling down, too much alcohol can make you feel worse. Avoid alcohol if you are taking antidepressants or medicines for anxiety.

**Accept your feelings.** The holidays bring up memories, and some of them may be bittersweet. Many people feel blue during the holidays. If you have lost a loved one, this may be an especially tough season. Expect to feel sad at times. It’s OK to cry and express your emotions.

**If you’re alone, reach out.** Instead of isolating yourself, find positive ways to contribute. Volunteer to serve at a soup kitchen. Help with a holiday food drive. Invite a coworker who doesn’t have close family or friends nearby to have dinner.

**Get help if you need it.** Feeling a little blue during the holidays may be normal, but depression is not. If you have depression symptoms, see your doctor. Depression can be treated successfully.

---

**Could it be seasonal depression?**

If you notice that holiday blues come back year after year, you might have seasonal affective disorder, or SAD. It is linked to decreased exposure to daylight, so it’s common in the darker months of late autumn and winter. Unlike holiday blues, SAD usually extends well beyond the holidays and lifts in spring, when the days get longer.

SAD may cause:

- Symptoms of depression such as fatigue, low self-esteem, loss of interest in normal activities and withdrawal from family and friends
- Weight gain and cravings for carbohydrates, especially sweet and starchy foods
- Oversleeping or trouble waking up in the morning

If you have these or other symptoms of depression, talk to your doctor. Getting outside in the light more or sitting by a window may help with mild symptoms. A special light box is usually effective for more severe symptoms.

---

Call 911 to get immediate help if you think you might harm yourself or others.
10 Survival Tips for Holiday Eating

With careful planning, you can avoid holiday weight gain. Read on for some savvy strategies to get you started.

The holiday eating season can wreak havoc on your diet. There are the traditional holiday meals, plus countless parties and events hosted by friends, coworkers, and relatives throughout the season.

As a result, American adults usually gain one to two pounds each year – including slightly less than one pound during the holidays. That might not sound like much. But over time, the extra weight can raise the risk of serious health problems such as diabetes, arthritis, and heart disease.

Taking charge

With a little careful thought and planning, you can avoid holiday weight gain. Below are some savvy strategies to get you started.

Plan ahead. Visualize what you will do at the event or party before you arrive. This will help you stick to a plan. Some ideas:

• Have no more than one alcoholic beverage, followed by mineral water or club soda.
• Pick out one favorite dessert and have a small piece.
• Focus on enjoying good conversation, not on eating.

Don’t starve yourself. Before an occasion involving food, eat a piece of fruit, a yogurt, or other light snack before you go. This helps to curb hunger so you don’t binge when you’re there. If the event is in the evening, make sure to have a healthy breakfast and lunch.

Bring your own. Offer to bring an appetizer such as fresh vegetables and low-fat dip. Or, ask to bring a healthy dish to serve at the main meal. This way, you are assured there will be something “safe” to eat. Others will appreciate your efforts, too!

Buddy up. Make a goal with a friend to maintain your weight during the holiday season. That way you are accountable to someone other than yourself.

Exercise. Sign up for a 5K, a fitness walk, a work challenge, or other fitness event. This will motivate you to focus on exercise and keep your body moving – a great way to prevent holiday weight gain. Besides burning extra calories, exercise can help you cope with stress and
depression, which are common for many people during the holidays. Check with your doctor before you increase your activity level.

Limit leftovers. Make your home a safe haven. Send your guests home with the high-calorie leftovers if you have entertained. There are enough temptations outside the house. There is no need to make your home a difficult place to maintain control.

Make smart substitutions. Practice making your favorite dishes a little healthier:

• Cut the sugar by one-third in the recipe.
• Use trans-fat-free margarine instead of lard or butter.
• Use 1% or evaporated skim milk instead of whole milk or cream.

Choose beverages wisely. Limit alcohol, which is high in calories:

• Liquors, sweet wines, and sweet mixed drinks contain 150 to 450 calories per glass.
• If you choose to drink, go for light wines and beers. Use nonalcoholic mixers such as water and diet soda or seltzer.
• Watch out for calories in fruit punch, juice, and egg nog as well.

Maintain perspective. A single day of overeating won’t make or break your eating plan. It takes days of overeating to gain weight. If you overindulge at a holiday meal, put it behind you. Return to your usual eating plan the next day, and leave your guilt behind.

Celebrate the true meaning of the holiday. Try to give food less importance by focusing on what the holidays are really about – spending time with family and friends.

Go Green This Holiday Season

Don’t let holiday stress crowd out your good intentions. Here are some ways to stay “green” through the season of giving.

You have good intentions. You use compact fluorescent light bulbs. You try to “reduce, reuse, recycle.” But when the holidays come, it’s easy to fall back into old habits and forget about your impact on the environment.

It’s even more important to make green choices during the holiday season. An estimated 6 million tons of extra garbage is produced in the U.S. between Thanksgiving and New Year’s. You can do your part to cut the waste, and you may even save money. Now that’s something to celebrate.

Eight tips for greener holidays

1. Take your own bags. Get some sturdy canvas, mesh, or nylon shopping bags and take them with you when you do your holiday shopping. For large items, skip bagging if you can.
2. **Look for the Energy Star.** Products with the Energy Star rating have met strict energy-efficiency standards, so they use less energy and save money. Energy Star rates an array of products, from light bulbs to TVs to large appliances.

3. **Buy recycled.** Items with recycled content help cut down on consumer waste. A wide variety of glassware, jewelry, paper products, and even clothing is made with recycled materials.

4. **Think outside the box.** Instead of a gift that can break or wear out, give tickets to a concert, play, sports event, or membership to a local museum or botanical garden. Present a coupon good for an evening of babysitting or knitting lessons.

5. **Be a green wrapper.** Most wrapping paper can’t be recycled, so it ends up in the trash. Make your own wrapping paper from the Sunday comics pages, maps, catalog pages, or brown paper bags. Wrap gifts in useful items such as bandanas or kitchen towels and tie with ribbon or lace. Or buy gift bags, tins, or baskets and reuse them each year. According to the Sierra Club, if every family did this with just three presents, it would save enough paper to cover 45,000 football fields.

6. **Decorate with LED lights.** LED lights use 90 percent less energy than standard holiday lights, and they last longer, too. They may cost a little more up front, but they pay for themselves in the long run.

7. **Recycle your tree.** Many cities have tree recycling during the holidays. Check with your local recycling program to find out about pickup or drop-off options.

8. **Recycle old electronics.** You got the new cell phone you wished for. But now, what do you do with your old cell phone? Or the MP3 player that went through the wash, or the rechargeable battery that no longer holds a charge? Recycle them. Recyclers recover millions of pounds of copper and precious metals from electronics every year. Recycling cuts pollution created by making new products, conserves resources, and keeps hazardous materials out of landfills.

   **To recycle consumer electronics:**

   • **Drop them off at local stores.** Best Buy, Office Depot, and Staples provide drop boxes for old cell phones, PDAs, rechargeable batteries, and other items.

   • **Return them to manufacturers.** HP, Dell, Sony, AT&T, and others provide mail-in or drop-off recycling for used electronics. Some will take larger items such as TVs and computers, even ones made by other manufacturers.

   • **Donate them.** Some schools have electronics recycling programs that raise money for activities. Check with your local school district to find out if a school in your area has a program.

To learn more about electronics recycling (eCycling), go to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) website at [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov) and type eCycling in the search box.