

7 Tips to Enjoy (Not Dread) Holidays with Your Family

Everywhere you look, there are reminders that the holidays are supposed to be a time for smiling families to gather around a perfectly set table. But real life is more complicated than that. These tips can help you enjoy holidays with your family without feeling drained.

1 Be realistic. It is OK if the kids—or the grown-ups—are not always on their best behavior. Accept the things that give your family its unique personality.

2 Stay in the moment. You may have to spend time with people who push your buttons. Practice mindfulness by focusing on the here and now. Do not dwell on something that happened 10 years ago.

3 Start positive conversations. Talk about what family members have in common. Try topics such as a shared hobby or an upcoming happy occasion. This helps avoid heated debates.

4 Express your appreciation. This is a good time to let others know how much you value the support they have shown you throughout the year.

5 Share fun family activities. Your family could take a walk, go ice skating, play a board game or make decorations. Repeat some favorite activities year after year.

6 Do not try to do too much. Lots of changes and excitement can overwhelm young kids. Stick with their usual routine for naps and bedtime to avoid meltdowns.

7 Sneak in some alone time. If you start feeling stressed, take a few minutes for yourself. Walk the family dog, listen to music, read a book or go for a run. You will enjoy your family time more if you step away and decompress when you need to.



STILL FEELING STRESSED?

Find out more about how to manage stress. Visit our online educational materials at www.ohpcc.org, then search for “stress.”

Newly Diagnosed with COPD?

Here Is What to Do

Finding out that you have asthma or COPD can feel overwhelming. Take charge of your health with these 4 tips—they can help you breathe easier and get back to the life you love.

1 Toss the cigarettes. If you smoke, make quitting your top goal. Smoking makes your symptoms more severe and difficult to control. It also raises your risk for life-threatening asthma attacks and further lung damage. Talk with your health care provider about the best quit strategy for you.

Secondhand smoke can also irritate your lungs. Ask family members to quit, too.

2 Create an action plan. Team up with your health care provider to make a personalized plan for your asthma or COPD. It should include several details, such as:

- Medications you need every day. Note the ones you should take if symptoms get worse.
- Tips for how to avoid triggers that bother your lungs. Some common triggers are tobacco smoke, pet dander, dust and even cold, dry air.
- Steps to take on days your condition flares up.
- What to do during a lung-related emergency. Write down when to call your health care provider or go to the emergency room.

Following a plan like this is proven to help control your asthma or COPD.

3 Be honest about breathing issues. Contact your health care provider if you are still bothered by symptoms such as shortness of breath, coughing, wheezing, chest tightness or fatigue. Share details about how these issues affect your life. Keep working with him or her to adjust your action plan so that it is right for you.

4 Protect yourself with vaccines. Asthma and COPD increase your risk for serious flu complications, such as pneumonia. The flu can also make asthma and COPD symptoms more severe. Get a flu shot every year. And protect yourself from pneumonia with the pneumococcal vaccine—you need 1 dose if you are younger than age 65, and then 2 more doses once you are 65 or older.

What Do Those Blood Pressure Numbers Mean?

You probably know blood pressure is important to your health. But do you know what the numbers stand for?

Blood Pressure Explained

Tissues and organs need blood to survive. Your heart is the pump that moves the blood along its way. Blood pressure is a way to measure how easy or difficult it is for your heart to send blood through your body.

Health care providers use 2 numbers to record blood pressure:

- The first number, called systolic pressure, represents the pressure in your blood vessels when your heart beats.
- The second number, called diastolic pressure, represents the pressure in your blood vessels when your heart rests between beats.

It is written like a fraction. For example: 115/75 mmHg (spoken as "115 over 75"). The "mmHg" stands for "millimeters of mercury." Mercury is the standard unit of measurement for pressure.

Up and Down Pressures

Your blood pressure numbers change throughout the day. They are affected by many things, such as:

- Physical activity
- Food
- Stress
- Sleep

When everything is going well, your blood vessels can become wider or narrower as needed. This helps keep blood flowing freely.

But if the system stops working normally, your heart has to pump harder to get the blood through your body. This means your blood pressure may stay too high for too long. Known as high blood pressure, it is when your first number is 130 mmHg or higher, or your bottom number is 80 mmHg or higher.

Which Number Matters Most?

Both numbers are important. However, the first number is usually used to identify heart health risks for people older than age 50. In most people, the systolic number tends to creep up with age.

Know Your Blood Pressure

To find out if you have high blood pressure, get your numbers checked by a health care provider at least:

- **Every year**, if you are age 40 or older, or at increased risk for high blood pressure.
- **Every three to five years**, if you are 18 to 39 years old and not at increased risk.

To learn more, go to www.heart.org/hbp.

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Try These Swaps to Create Your Own Healthy Recipe

Looking for an easy way to boost nutrition and cut calories? Simple ingredient swaps in recipes can help make it happen.

- **Slim down milk products.**

Cook with evaporated skim milk instead of whole milk or cream. Use nonfat sour cream or plain low-fat yogurt instead of sour cream. This will cut calories and fat.

- **Go whole grain.**

Substitute whole wheat flour for at least half the white flour in a recipe to add fiber, vitamins and minerals.

- **Choose friendly fat.** Rely on monounsaturated oils such as olive or canola instead of butter or margarine. These contain essential fatty acids your body needs instead of saturated fat, which is a culprit in heart disease.

- **Cut the salt.** Instead, use herbs, spices, lemon, wine and salt-free seasoning blends. Eating less salt can help control blood pressure.

Traveling this Holiday Season?

Find out other steps you can take to eat healthy on the go. Visit our online educational materials at www.ohpcc.org, then search for "traveling."

