

WELLNESS NEWSLETTER

At a Glance.....

- ✓ **Holiday Survival Tricks and Tips**
- ✓ **Seniors and Medication Management**


**HOLIDAY SURVIVAL KNOW-HOW...
IS THERE SUCH A THING?!?!**

If you find yourself fantasizing about a holiday season filled with perfect company, exceptional food and great times, you are not alone. However, along with the holiday season comes stressors (both positive and negative) and extra aggravations.

According to psychiatrist Mark Levy, MD, "it is no surprise that fantasy and reality don't always meet during the holidays". How many times have we set ourselves up for expectations of a perfect holiday, only to be disappointed.

Perhaps some, or all, of the following stress-busters outlined by Dr. Levy, which are aimed at maintaining well-being and letting you enjoy the holidays, will work for you.

- **Set Limits** - set realistic goals, pace yourself, prioritize activities and organize your time.
- **Eat Chocolate** - chocolate is a powerful mood elevator. Remember, no need to binge – a little chocolate goes a long way...
- **Walk Away from Stress** - stress hinders sleep, and daytime drowsiness makes it harder to cope. Those who exercise regularly reduce their likelihood of sleep disorders and daytime drowsiness
- **Let out Emotions** - find constructive outlets like exercise or meditation to free your emotions
- **Laugh a Lot** - according to psychologist Edward J. O'Brien, humour seems to inoculate you against anxiety
- **Seek Kneaded Relief** - a good massage can work wonders. Rubdowns enhance your alertness; lower anxiety, blood pressure and depression; lower your level of stress hormones; relax muscles tied in knots
- **Limit Alcohol** - despite its "cheery" reputation, alcohol depresses the spirit and interrupts sleep, don't drink alcohol within two hours of bedtime
- **Listen to Music** - pleasant music brings relaxation and clear thinking and drives away hostility, fatigue, sadness and tension
- **Use Scent Sense** - soak in a tub spiked with a favourite aroma; fill the house with the pleasant smell of baked goods - lavender and nutmeg stimulate relaxation; jasmine and peppermint perk up moods

Source: WebMD - Healthier Holidays - Ways to Beat Holiday Stress


Keeping the Holidays Heartburn Free!

Uh Oh, it begins slowly at first, picks up speed, then watchout, you have now developed the annual holiday case of FULL BLOWN HEARTBURN. What can you do to avoid the unnecessary evil this year? Read on...

Dr. David Peura, a spokesperson for the National Heartburn Alliance (NHA), states "heartburn to most people is a burning discomfort under the breastbone, it's the stomach feeling a need to vent".

Most cases of heartburn are brought on by foods high in fat. However, chocolate, peppermint, citrus fruits and tomato-based dishes also cause some people problems. To prevent heartburn, the NHA offers the following suggestions:

- ✓ save over-stuffing for the turkey, eat smaller portions and try to avoid overeating
- ✓ minimize late-night munching and after-dinner dozing, merely being horizontal can encourage acid to creep into the esophagus and cause discomfort
- ✓ choose wisely from the buffet table, avoiding your personal food triggers
- ✓ add exercise to your holiday list, it will get your digestive system going
- ✓ drink in moderation; caffeinated, carbonated or alcoholic drinks can contribute to heartburn
- ✓ lighten up in your cooking, use less fat in those favourite holiday recipes
- ✓ don't wear tight clothing or belts - it just makes heartburn worse
- ✓ minimize stress; plan ahead to avoid the last-minute holiday crunch, when schedules are packed, try meditation and other stress-relieving activities - too much stress can make heartburn seem worse
- ✓ instead of lying down after 'THE BIG MEAL', take a walk with the family

Source: WebMD Medical News, Jeanie Davis

Do you continually wake up feeling sluggish and unrefreshed? Insomnia refers to the chronic inability to obtain the *amount* or *quality* of sleep needed to function adequately during the daytime. Since sleep requirements vary from 4 to 9 hours a day among healthy people, there is no way to determine the “right” amount of sleep. We have difficulty falling asleep when we are anxious or upset. According to Jon Fleming, MD, there are 9 Rules of Sleep Hygiene.

1. *Do not go to bed until you are drowsy.* Most individuals will go to bed before they are sleepy in an attempt to ‘catch up’ on lost sleep and relieve their sense of tiredness and fatigue. Often, these people don’t sleep, but worry about issues in their daily lives.
2. *Get up at the same time each morning, including weekends.* Maintaining a reasonably early awakening time is one of the important time cues for the 24 hour sleep-wake rhythm. Breaking this rule causes sleep disruption in both good and poor sleepers.
3. *Do not take naps.* Napping disrupts the sleep-wake cycle, particularly if the nap occurs more than 10 hours after the major sleep period.
4. *Reduce or eliminate the use of alcohol.* Do not drink alcohol later than 2 hours before bedtime.
5. *Reduce or eliminate the use of caffeine.* Do not consume caffeine after about 4:00 p.m.
6. *Reduce or eliminate the use of nicotine.* Do not smoke within 4 hours of your bedtime.
7. *Exercise regularly.* Avoid strenuous physical exertion after 6:00 p.m.
8. *Eat a light carbohydrate snack.* May help promote sleep in those who tend to eat most in the second half of the day.
9. *Adjust the sleep environment.* Make sure it is comfortable warm (or cool), with minimal levels of light and noise.

The Elderly and Medication Management

Increasingly, along with the pressures of raising children and managing a career, more and more individuals are facing the responsibility of caring for aging family members.

One of the largest responsibilities in the assistance of the independent-living elderly, is the safe and effective management of medications.

Seniors often take more than one medication at a time. Mixing medications, missing doses or taking too much medication can cause very serious problems.

It is important that anyone filling a prescription from your doctor understand that medication (liquid, pills) can help you feel better. However, it can also hurt you if you don’t take it correctly. To take medications safely, an individual should be able to answer the following questions:

What is the correct name of my medication?
Why do I need to take this medication?
How do I take this medication?
What are the (possible) side effects of this medication?
What should I do if I run out of this medication?
Where should I keep my medication?
What do I do with medication I don’t need anymore?
Who do I talk to when I have a problem or question?

Once seniors (or anyone) clearly understand the what and why of their medications, it is important that they take, and keep track of their medications correctly.

If taking one or two medications daily, it may be helpful to suggest they take their medications at the same time as they do something else that they do every day, such as brush their teeth.

If taking several different kinds of medication, it may be helpful to suggest using a plastic container for keeping track of all their medications.

Available at the pharmacy, these plastic containers have separate compartments for each day of the week and for time of the day. Patients will be able to keep enough medication for one week in their containers. If they miss a dose, they will know right away by looking at their containers. If seniors do not feel comfortable filling their containers by themselves, suggest that you, a nurse or a pharmacist assist them.

Source: Health Canada



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