

FOR THE HEALTH OF IT!



Respiratory Illness Season

CDC expects the upcoming U.S. fall and winter respiratory disease season will likely have a similar combined number of peak hospitalizations due to COVID-19, influenza, and RSV compared to last season.

Anyone can get sick from an infectious respiratory illness; however, some people are at increased risk of getting severe illnesses. Some risk factors include:

- Age: Children under 5 years old and Older Adults
- Underlying Medical Conditions: chronic lung diseases, heart disease, diabetes, weakened immune system

Vaccination is an important tool to protect yourself and your loved ones from serious illness from Flu, RSV, and COVID-19.

- Flu vaccination is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older
- RSV vaccination is recommended for adults ages 75 and older and adults ages 50-74 who are at increased risk for severe RSV
- RSV vaccination for pregnant women or infant RSV antibody after birth can help protect babies during the respiratory illness season
- COVID-19 vaccination can be given to anyone age 6 months and older on the basis of shared decision-making with their medical provider

Help protect against illness:

- Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer often
- Cover your cough and sneeze
- Keep your distance from people that are sick
- Stay home when you are sick
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces
- Improve indoor air by opening windows, using exhaust fans, or using air filters
- Wear a mask to protect yourself from circulating viruses

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Seasonal Affective Disorder Awareness

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is more than just a seasonal “funk”. SAD is a very real type of depression most commonly associated with the fall and winter months. As the weather changes and the days are darker, many people may notice changes to their moods. This time of year it is important to keep in mind symptoms of SAD.

Symptoms include:

- low energy
- depressed mood
- hopelessness
- irritability or anxiety
- poor concentration
- social withdrawal
- changes in sleep and/or appetite
- loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed

What can you do about it?

- **Structure.** Go to bed at a regular time, and get enough rest. Give focus to eating healthy meals on a regular schedule.
- **Make your environment brighter when you can.** Open blinds, and sit closer to bright windows. Consider investing in a light box.
- **Get outside.** Go for a walk, take your lunch outside, take short breaks throughout your day and enjoy the sunshine.
- **Exercise.** A regular exercise routine can help with stress relief, and being more fit can help to increase self esteem. Plus, exercise increases levels in your brain of the same chemicals used in antidepressant medications!
- **Socialize.** Connect with the people you enjoy being around.
- **Take a trip.** Make an effort to plan for vacations during the winter months when possible.

A couple things to remember:

- We all have tough days and times when life presents us with an increase in overall stress. It's ok to have a bad day. However, SAD is a type of depression. If your symptoms do not improve, or even worsen, it is important to reach out to your health care provider.
- Treatment options can include establishing with a therapist or certain medications



Nearly half of holiday decoration fires happen because decorations are placed too close to a heat source.

It's fun to decorate for the winter holidays, but holiday decorations can increase your risk for a home fire.

As you deck the halls this season, be fire smart.

- Inspect holiday lights each year before you put them up. Throw away light strands with frayed or pinched wires.
- Water your Christmas tree every day. A dry tree is dangerous because it can catch on fire easily.
- Consider using battery-operated flameless candles, which can look, smell and feel like real candles.
- If you do use lit candles, make sure they are in stable holders and place them where they cannot be knocked down easily.



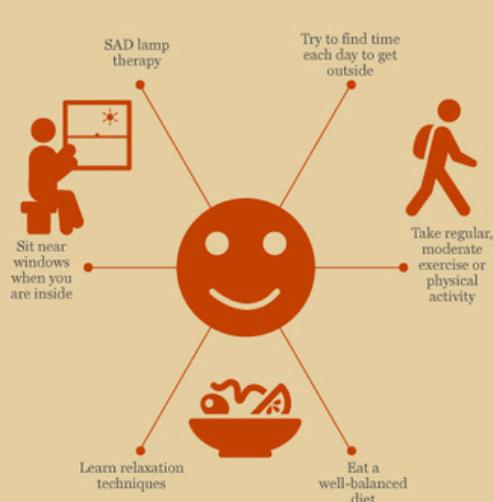
SYMPTOMS OF SAD

Individual experiences with SAD vary, but there are a few symptoms you can look out for if you are feeling blue:



TREATMENTS OF SAD

If you are experiencing SAD, or a case of the winter blues, consult with your doctor about the following treatments:



Winter Fall Prevention

When winter storms hit, good balance can prevent falls and injuries — ranging from broken arms, legs or hips to back injuries and concussions.

The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control says slips and falls are the leading cause of nonfatal injury across all age groups, except the 10–24 group. One in every 5 falls results in a serious injury, such as head trauma or broken bones. That's more than 800,000 people being hospitalized each year.

To remain upright and steady, the even distribution of weight over your feet is vital. Many parts of your body play key roles in your balance. Muscles, bones, joints, eyes, the balance organ in the inner ear, nerves, heart and blood vessels must work normally to maintain your balance. When these systems aren't functioning well, balance problems can arise.

Keeping your balance no matter the weather

- Your arms are one of the greatest aids in maintaining your balance, especially when it's icy. Start with your hands, and wear gloves. Gloves keep your hands warm and out of your pockets, which frees up your arms so you can extend them out from your sides to improve your ability to stay upright.
- Your feet also aid in balance. Assume that all wet, dark areas on pavements are slippery and icy. Slow down, take short, careful steps at first, and then adjust your pace to surface conditions. Or walk like a penguin. Point your feet slightly outward, and put your center of gravity directly over your feet as much as possible.

Other tips to tackle tricky walking conditions include:

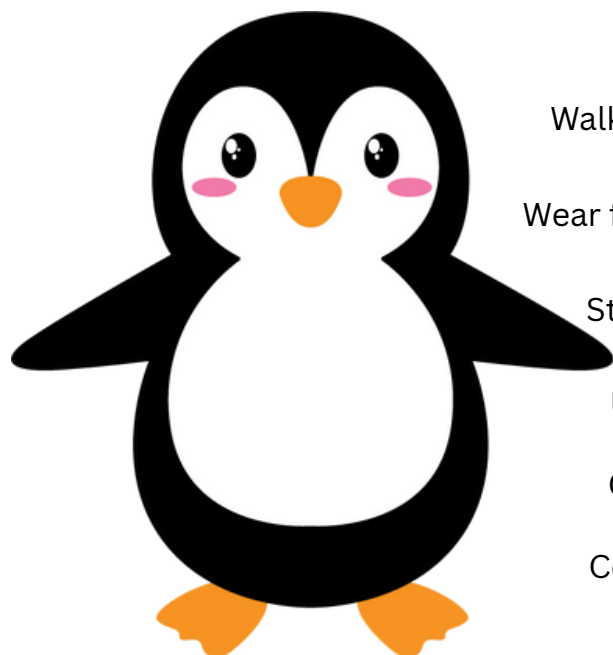
- Use a backpack or a cross-body bag when carrying something to free up your hands. If you need to carry groceries or heavy bags, take them one at a time.
- Wear winter assistive devices with built-in grippers over your shoes or boots. Or wear lace-up shoes that fit well and have deep-grooved, nonskid, rubber treads.
- Wipe your shoes and boots thoroughly on the floor mat when coming inside.
- Use a cane or walking poles when out in winter weather.
- Avoid texting when walking on snow or ice. It can be an accident waiting to happen.
- Get in and out of your vehicle slowly, holding onto the door and steering wheel while stepping on or off a slippery surface.

Getting back on your feet

If you do fall, make sure you're not injured. Then, roll onto your hands and knees. Take one foot and place it between your hands, then bring the other foot between your hands. Keep your feet shoulder-width apart, and push yourself up from there.

If you think you might be hurt or are unsure if an injury is serious, seek medical care immediately.

WALK LIKE A PENGUIN!



Walk flat footed. Take small steps.

Wear footwear that provides traction.

Step down, not out, from curbs.

Use your arms for balance.

Only carry what you need.

Consider using a backpack or crossbody bag.

Handwashing Awareness Week

December 7-13



Washing your hands is easy, and it's one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of germs. Studies have shown that hand washing can prevent 1 in 3 diarrhea related illnesses and 1 in 5 respiratory infections, such as a cold or the flu.

Follow these five steps every time.

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water, turn off the tap, and apply soap.
2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Sing the ABC's!
4. Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
5. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

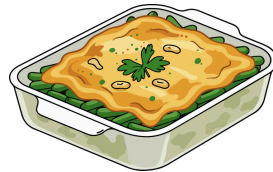
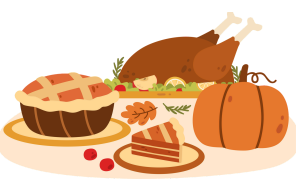
If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

HEALTH FIRST

WASHING HANDS IS AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO PREVENT GERMS



Food Safety Tips During the Holiday Season



Stop food poisoning before it stops you.

KNOW THE 4 Cs OF FOOD SAFETY:

CLEAN

COOK

CLEAR

CALL

MANY PEOPLE GET FOOD POISONING EACH YEAR.

The most common symptoms include:

Nausea

Diarrhea

Vomiting

Stomach pain/cramps



CLEAN

Wash hands, utensils, and surfaces often when cooking.

Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs separate from other foods.

Use different cutting boards for different food items.



COOK

Use a food thermometer to make sure the food has been cooked to the recommended safe internal temperature.

Microwave food thoroughly and follow directions on the package.



CLEAR

Put leftovers away quickly. Refrigerate within 2 hours.

Eat or discard food before harmful bacteria can grow.



CALL

Call Poison Help (1-800-222-1222) if you suspect food poisoning or have questions about food safety!

Questions about food safety or food poisoning?

Call Poison Help: **1-800-222-1222**.



December is Sharps Injury Prevention Month



5 ways to prevent Sharps & Needlestick Injuries

- Plan safe handling and disposal before any procedure.
- Use safe and effective needle alternatives when available.
- Activate the device's safety features.
- Immediately dispose of contaminated needles in OSHA-compliant sharps containers.
- Complete bloodborne pathogens trainings.

For more information:
www.osha.gov/sharps

Safe Toy Month



DECEMBER IS NATIONAL
IMPAIRED DRIVING
PREVENTION MONTH

When it comes to toys and gifts, it is critical to consider the safety and age range of the toys.

While shopping this holiday season, notice if the toys you wish to give suits the age and individual skills and abilities of the child who will receive it, especially for infants and children under age three.

This holiday season (and beyond), please consider the following guidelines for choosing safe toys for all ages:

- Inspect all toys before purchasing. Avoid those that shoot or include parts that fly off. The toy should have no sharp edges or points and should be sturdy enough to withstand impact without breaking, being crushed, or being pulled apart easily.
- When purchasing toys for children with special needs try to: Choose toys that may appeal to different senses such as sound, movement, and texture; consider interactive toys to allow the child to play with others; and think about the size of the toy and the position a child would need to be in to play with it.
- Be diligent about inspecting toys your child has received. Check them for age, skill level, and developmental appropriateness before allowing them to be played with.
- Look for labels that assure you the toys have passed a safety inspection – “ATSM” means the toy has met the American Society for Testing and Materials standards.
- Gifts of sports equipment should always be accompanied by protective gear (give a helmet with the skateboard)
- Keep kids safe from lead in toys by: Educating yourself about lead exposure from toys, symptoms of lead poisoning, and what kinds of toys have been recalled; being aware that old toys may be more likely to contain lead in the paint; having your children wash their hands frequently and calling your doctor if you suspect your child has been exposed to lead.
- Do NOT give toys with small parts (including magnets and “button” batteries) to young children as they tend to put things in their mouths, increasing the risk of choking.
- Do NOT give toys with ropes and cords or heating elements.
- Do NOT give crayons and markers unless they are labeled “nontoxic”.

During the holiday season, many of us look forward to get-togethers with friends and family. Unfortunately, holidays can also be a dangerous time for alcohol- and drug-related traffic incidents.

We know a lot about how alcohol impairs the ability to drive — affecting our vision, reaction times, judgement, and ability to multi-task. Driving under the influence of other drugs can have equally deadly consequences.

What You Can Do

We all want to celebrate safely. That begins with renewing our commitment to sober driving and supporting our loved ones and communities to do the same. Just one drink (or substance) can affect a person’s driving.

- If you’re attending a gathering where alcohol or other substances will be served, plan beforehand to get home safely.
 - designate a sober driver or arrange for a taxi or ride share (to and from your destination).
- Don’t let others get behind the wheel if they’re under the influence.
 - Take their keys and arrange a sober ride home or have them stay the night.
- If you host a party where alcohol or other substances will be served:
 - Ask your guests to make a plan to get home safely.
 - Offer substance-free beverages.
 - Make sure all guests leave with a sober driver.
- Always wear a seat belt.
- Make sure that everyone in the vehicle wears a seat belt.
- If you see an impaired driver on the road, pull over and contact local law enforcement.

Talk with your kids about impaired driving.

Let them know:

- It’s never okay to get behind the wheel of a motor vehicle while under the influence.
- Getting in a car with someone who has been drinking or using drugs is dangerous.

Help kids plan an exit strategy, to avoid accepting a ride from someone under the influence.

CHILDREN AGE 3 & UNDER

Babies and toddlers can find all sorts of ways to get into trouble. Remember these tips when giving gifts to these little ones:

DO

Buy **plush and soft toys** instead of harder toys that can cause injury.



Only purchase crayons, markers or paints that are labeled as **non-toxic**.



Buy **books**. Reading out loud to children age 0-3 is very important for their development.



DON'T

Don't buy toys with parts that can fit through a toilet paper roll – they are **choking hazards**.



Avoid toys with **long ropes or strings**, like pull-along toys or dress-up necklaces, as they could strangle small children.



Never purchase **high-powered magnet sets** for young children as magnets can cause serious injuries when swallowed.

