This issue of Health and Safety News is dedicated to providing information exclusively related to the holiday season. During this time of year people gather for parties, travel, and make purchases for family and friends, so the CDC (http://www.cdc.gov/) is the ideal location to find information that everyone can use to have a safe, happy, and healthy time. This month’s newsletter features sections detailing relevant topics to everyone, no matter what this time of year means to you. For further details about any topic presented, please visit the CDC’s website indicated above or the one next to each topic. Also, in some of the sections, there will be words or phrases highlighted in blue and to find out more about them, just right click and select Open Hyperlink. Enjoy!

**Topic One: Twelve Health and Safety Tips for the Holidays** (http://www.cdc.gov/Features/HealthyTips/)

Give the gift of health and safety to yourself and others by following these holiday tips.

1. Wash hands often to keep yourself from spreading germs and getting sick.
2. Bundle up to stay dry and warm.
3. Manage stress. Don't over-commit yourself; prevent holiday anxiety and pressure.
4. Don't drink and drive or let others drink and drive.
5. Be smoke-free. Avoid smoking and second-hand smoke.
6. Fasten seat belts while driving or riding in a motor vehicle. Always buckle your child in the car using a child safety seat, booster seat, or seat belt according to his/her height, weight, and age.
7. Get exams and screenings. Ask what exams you need and when to get them.
8. Get your vaccinations, which help prevent diseases and save lives.
9. Monitor the children. Keep potentially dangerous toys, food, drinks, household
items, and other objects out of kids’ reach. Make sure toys are used properly.

10. Practice fire safety. Most residential fires occur during the winter months, so be careful to never leave fireplaces, space heaters, stoves, or candles unattended. Have an emergency plan and practice it regularly.

11. Prepare food safely. Remember these simple steps: wash hands and surfaces often, avoid cross-contamination, cook foods to proper temperatures, and refrigerate promptly.

12. Eat healthy, and get moving. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables. Limit your portion sizes and foods high in fat and sugar. Be active for at least 2½ hours a week and help kids and teens be active for at least 1 hour a day.

**Topic Two: Lead Hazards in Some Holiday Toys**

(https://www.cdc.gov/Features/LeadInToys/)

The holiday season is here, and that means many children will be given toys as gifts. While new toys are a holiday tradition, parents should be aware of potential lead hazards associated with toys, including toy jewelry. Review these important facts to keep your children safe this holiday season.

Lead is invisible to the naked eye and has no smell. Children may be exposed to it from consumer products through normal handling of the product. They often place toys and other objects, as well as their fingers that have touched these objects, in their mouth, which exposes them to lead paint or dust.

**Lead in Toys**

Toys that have been made in other countries and then imported into the United States, or antique toys or collectibles passed down through generations, often contain lead that puts children at risk for such exposure. To reduce these risks, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) issues recalls of toys that could potentially expose children to lead. Learn more about preventing lead exposure.
Lead may be used in two aspects of toy manufacturing.

- **Paint:** Lead may be in the paint on toys. It was banned in house paint, on products marketed to children, and in dishes and cookware in the United States in 1978. However, lead is still widely used in other countries and therefore can be found on imported toys. Lead may also be found on toys made in the United States before the ban.
- **Plastic:** While regulated, the use of lead in plastics has not been banned in the United States. It softens and stabilizes the plastic; however, when the plastic is exposed to substances such as sunlight, air, and detergents, the plastic breaks down and may form a lead dust.

**How can I test a toy for lead?**

Only a certified laboratory can accurately test a toy for lead. Although do-it-yourself kits are available, they do not indicate how much lead is present, and their reliability at detecting low levels of lead has not been determined.

**What should I do if I am concerned about my child’s exposure to lead?**

If you suspect that your child has been exposed to a toy containing lead, remove the toy immediately. The only way to tell if your child has been exposed to lead is to have the child’s blood tested. Your health care provider can advise whether such a test is needed and also can recommend treatment if your child has been exposed to lead.

**Lead in Toy Jewelry**

If jewelry containing lead is swallowed or put in a child’s mouth, the child can be poisoned.

**What should I do if I believe my child has put lead jewelry in their mouth?**

See your health care provider. He or she can perform a blood test to see whether your child has been exposed to lead and recommend treatment if necessary. Most children with elevated blood-lead levels do not have any symptoms. However, there is no safe level of lead in blood. As blood-lead levels increase, a
larger effect on children’s learning and behavior will occur. A blood-lead test is the only way to know if your child has an elevated lead level.

**What are the effects of wearing toy jewelry?**

Just wearing toy jewelry that contains lead will not cause your child to have a high level of lead in their blood. However, small children often put things in their mouth. You should make sure that all children in your household do not have access to jewelry or other items that may contain lead.

**Recall Information**

The CPSC asks parents to search for possible recalls of toys their children have and take the toys away immediately if they have been recalled. Parents should search their children’s toys for metal jewelry and throw it away. Photos and descriptions of recalled toys and toy jewelry are available on the CPSC Web site. CPSC can be contacted also by telephone at 1-800-638-2772.

**Topic Three: Stay Safe this Holiday Season**

(Tips from CDC's Injury Center on [motor vehicle safety](http://www.cdc.gov/Features/RoadSafety/) can help you protect yourself, your passengers, and your family and friends. Whether you're headed around town, out of town, or out to celebrate, be safe this holiday season.

**Protect Your Passengers**

Whenever you're on the road this holiday season, remember to always buckle up. Wearing your seat belt can reduce your risk of dying in a crash by about half. Also, make sure your young passengers are buckled into appropriate safety seats. The safest place for children of any age to ride is properly restrained in the back seat. Data show that child safety seats reduce the risk of death in car crashes by 71% for infants and 54% for toddlers ages one to four.

Learn more about child passenger safety and CDC's research and activities in this area.
Celebrate Safely
During the holiday season, and year-round, take steps to make sure that you and everyone you celebrate with avoids driving under the influence of alcohol. Following these tips can help you stay safe:

- **Plan ahead.**
  Always designate a non-drinking driver before any holiday party or celebration begins.
- **Take the keys.**
  Don't let friends drive if they are impaired.
- **Be a helpful host.**
  If you're hosting a party this holiday season, remind your guests to plan ahead and designate their sober driver; offer alcohol-free beverages; and make sure all of your guests leave with a sober driver.

Learn more about alcohol-impaired driving and CDC's research and activities in this area.

Know That Parents Are the Key
This holiday season, and throughout the year, talk with your teen about the dangers of driving—and keep the conversation going. CDC also encourages you to take these steps to help keep your teen driver safe:

- **Extend your teen's supervised driving period.** Help your teen develop the skills he or she needs by providing as many supervised practice driving hours as possible. Include at least 30 to 50 hours of practice over at least six months. Make sure to practice on a variety of road conditions and at different times of day.

- **Set the rules of the road.** Practice driving will empower your teen, but your rules will provide much needed limits to keep him or her safe.
  
  Support the rules that most states have for new teen drivers by including the following:
  
  o Make sure your teen always wears a seat belt.
  o Limit your teen's nighttime driving.
  o Restrict the number of teen passengers allowed in the car.
Enforce the rules with a Parent-Teen Driving Agreement. Discuss your rules of the road with your teen. Talk about why they are important to follow, as well as consequences for breaking the rules. Work with your teen to draft and sign a parent-teen driving agreement. You may choose to hang yours on the refrigerator door to highlight the importance of safe driving. Let your teen know that following the rules and driving safely will result in greater driving privileges.

Learn more about CDC's Parents Are the Key campaign and research and activities in this area.

More Information

- CDC: Information on Motor Vehicle Safety
- CDC: Information on Child Passenger Safety
- CDC: Information on Impaired Driving
- CDC: Information on Teen Drivers
- Protect the Ones You Love: Road Traffic Injuries
- Task Force on Community Preventive Services and the Community Guide: Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety
- CDC Podcasts on Motor Vehicle Safety

Topic Four: Stay Healthy during the Holidays: Avoid Binge Drinking (http://www.cdc.gov/Features/BingeDrinking/)

The holiday season is a time to spend with friends and family, enjoy festive meals, and celebrate the joy of the New Year. However, when too much alcohol is in the mix, the celebration can be over before it even starts.

Binge drinking, defined as 5 or more drinks on a single occasion for men or 4 or more drinks on a single occasion for women, is a dangerous behavior. Drinking too much, including binge drinking, causes more than 79,000 deaths in the U.S. each year and is a leading preventable cause of death. More than 15% of
U.S. adults report binge drinking. It is most common in men, adults in the 18-34 age range, and people with household incomes of $75,000 or more. Most people who binge drink are not alcohol-dependent or alcoholics and often engage in this behavior without realizing the health and social problems of their drinking.

**Endangering Yourself and Others**

During the holiday season, and throughout the year, individuals can put themselves, their family, and their community in danger of experiencing many harmful health and safety outcomes. Binge drinking increases the chances of:

- Motor vehicle crashes.
- Violence against others and sexual assaults.
- Risky sexual behaviors that can lead to HIV, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and unintended pregnancy.
- Alcohol poisoning.
- Babies born with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders.
- Over time, binge drinking can lead to liver disease, certain cancers, heart disease, and other chronic diseases.

**Taking Action**

Don't spend the holidays in the emergency room as a result of binge drinking. Experience the joy of the holidays by keeping yourself and your family healthy and safe.

All people can:

- Choose not to binge drink themselves and help others not to do it.
- Avoid mixing alcohol with energy drinks, which can mask the depressant effects of alcohol.
- Avoid drinking and driving.
- Avoid purchasing or serving alcohol to children and teenagers.
- Choose not to drink if they are pregnant, or may become pregnant.
- Talk with their health care providers about their drinking behavior and request counseling if they drink too much.
- Participate in community efforts to prevent binge drinking.

**More Information**

For more information about the harms of drinking too much, including binge drinking, visit the Alcohol and Public Health program site.
Topic Five: Managing Diabetes During the Holidays
(http://www.cdc.gov/Features/DiabetesManagement/)

The most important step in managing diabetes during holiday travel and festivities is preparing. Know what you'll be eating, how to enjoy a few traditional favorites while sticking with a healthy meal plan, and how to pack necessary supplies for a trip, and you're all set to celebrate!

Feasts and Parties
Before you go, take these steps to make sure you stick to your healthy meal plan.

- Eat a healthy snack to avoid overeating at the party.
- Ask what food will be served, so you can see how it fits into your meal plan.
- Bring a nutritious snack or dish for yourself and others.

You don't have to give up all of your holiday favorites if you make healthy choices and limit portion sizes. At a party or holiday gathering, follow these tips to avoid overeating and to choose healthy foods.

- If you're at a buffet, fix your plate and move to another room away from the food, if possible.
- Choose smaller portions.
- Choose low-calorie drinks such as sparkling water, unsweetened tea or diet beverages. If you select an alcoholic beverage, limit it to one drink a day for women, two for men, and drink only with a meal.
- Watch out for heavy holiday favorites such as hams coated with a honey glaze, turkey swimming in gravy and side dishes loaded with butter, sour cream, cheese or mayonnaise. Instead, choose turkey without gravy and trim off the skin, or other lean meats.
- Look for side dishes and vegetables that are light on butter, dressing and other extra fats and sugars, such as marshmallows or fried vegetable toppings.
- Watch the salt. Some holiday favorites are made with prepared foods high in sodium. Choose fresh or frozen vegetables that are low in sodium.
- Select fruit instead of pies, cakes and other desserts high in fat, cholesterol and sugar.
- Focus on friends, family and activities instead of food. Take a walk after a meal, or join in the dancing at a party.
Traveling for the Holidays
Leaving home to visit friends and family means changing routines. Make sure you remember to take care of your diabetes while traveling. Check blood glucose (sugar) more often than usual, because a changing schedule can affect levels.

Remember Your Medication
- Pack twice the amount of diabetes supplies you expect to need, in case of travel delays.
- Keep snacks, glucose gel, or tablets with you in case your blood glucose drops.
- Make sure you keep your medical insurance card and emergency phone numbers handy, including your doctor's name and phone number.
- Carry medical identification that says you have diabetes.
- Keep time zone changes in mind so you'll know when to take medication.
- If you use insulin, make sure you also pack a glucagon emergency kit.
- Keep your insulin cool by packing it in an insulated bag with refrigerated gel packs.

On the Road and in the Air
- Get an influenza vaccination before traveling, unless your medical provider instructs otherwise. Get the flu shot, not the nasal spray.
- Wash hands often with soap and water. Try to avoid contact with sick people.
- Reduce your risk for blood clots by moving around every hour or two.
- Pack a small cooler of foods that may be difficult to find while traveling, such as fresh fruit, sliced raw vegetables, and fat-free or low-fat yogurt.
- Bring a few bottles of water instead of sweetened soda or juice.
- Pack dried fruit, nuts, and seeds as snacks. Since these foods can be high in calories, measure out small portions (¼ cup) in advance.
- If you're flying and do not want to walk through the metal detector with your insulin pump, tell a security officer that you are wearing an insulin pump and ask them to visually inspect the pump and do a full-body pat-down.
- Place all diabetes supplies in carry-on luggage. Keep medications and snacks at your seat for easy access. Don't store them in overhead bins.
• Have all syringes and insulin delivery systems (including vials of insulin) clearly marked with the pharmaceutical preprinted label that identifies the medications. Keep it in the original pharmacy labeled packaging.
• If a meal will be served during your flight, call ahead for a diabetic, low fat, or low cholesterol meal. Wait until your food is about to be served before you take your insulin.
• If the airline doesn't offer a meal, bring a nutritious meal yourself. Make sure to pack snacks in case of flight delays.
• When drawing up your dose of insulin, don't inject air into the bottle (the air on your plane will probably be pressurized).
• Stick with your routine for staying active. Make sure to get at least 150 minutes of physical activity every week. Ten minutes at a time is fine.

More Information

• CDC’s Division of Diabetes Translation
• National Diabetes Education Program
• Transportation Security Agency guidelines for airline passengers with diabetes
• Have Diabetes. Will Travel. [PDF - 74 KB]
• Healthy Eating During Winter Gatherings for People With Diabetes [PDF - 43 KB]
• Have a Holiday Heart-to-Heart About Diabetes History
• American Diabetes Association – Holiday Meal Planning
• Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation – Traveling With Type 1 Diabetes

Topic Six: Save Energy and Resources This Holiday Season (http://www.cdc.gov/Features/GreenHolidays/)

Make "green" holiday choices when you are shopping, traveling, decorating, sending cards, and choosing gifts. When you save energy and resources, you protect the environment and safeguard health both now and for the future.

The winter holidays are here! Some of us are ready for the festivities, but many of us are still planning and shopping for decorations and gifts and organizing holiday gatherings. We want to enjoy the fun and spirit of the season, but we don't want to spend too much money or use too many resources in the process. And most of all, we want to enjoy quality time with those we love.

The good news is that we can participate in all these holiday activities and still manage to conserve resources. In doing so, we also protect our environment and protecting our environment can safeguard our health now and in the future.
Whether we are traveling, sending holiday cards, decorating our homes, or choosing gifts, all of us can have "green" celebrations. Even if you already reduce, reuse and recycle, browse through the suggestions below for more ways to bring those practices into your holiday activities. If all of us make even a few eco-friendly choices, we will save energy and resources and send less trash to the landfill during this busy time of year.

Decorate with items that are energy-efficient and durable.

- Research the most energy efficient choice for your holiday tree. The choice will vary depending on your location. Below are some suggestions.
  - Use other types of decorations besides trees.
  - Buy an artificial tree that you can use for years to come.
  - Contact your state cooperative extension service to find out about trees grown in your area or trees grown in ways that keep forests healthy and safe.
  - Buy a living tree you can plant outside or keep as a houseplant after the holidays.
  - Buy a smaller tree so that you have less to recycle.
  - Dispose of your tree at a chipping facility or return to the environment in other eco-friendly ways.
- Use energy efficiently.
  - Consider using few or no lights in your holiday decorations.
  - Decorate with more energy efficient LED (light emitting diodes) strings.
  - Plug your decorative indoor and outdoor lights into a timer to save electricity.
- Decorate creatively and inexpensively with natural materials from your yard or with items you already own.
- Choose durable ornaments from wood, metal, or cloth rather than plastic or thin glass.

Use fewer resources when you shop, give presents, and wrap gifts.

- Take your own bags on shopping trips. Keep them in the car so they're ready whenever you stop at a store.
- Shop online.
- Conserve energy when shopping. Use mass transit if possible. If you have to drive, combine several errands in one trip or carpool with family and friends.
- Give gifts that are durable, energy-efficient, recyclable, or made of natural products.
- Buy from local shops and craft shows or from companies that use fair-trade practices.
- Search antique and second-hand stores for unique gifts.
- Make your own gifts: knit, sew, bake, or create art from reused items.
- Make calendars using your own photographs or make a recipe book with your favorite recipes.
- Give a membership or an experience—tuition for a class or a visit to a museum.
- Give of your time—coupons for providing a meal, planting a garden, cleaning, or using another talent or skill.
- Plant a tree in someone's yard.
- Use creative materials for gift wrap:
  - Scarves, fabric, handkerchiefs
  - Old maps, sheet music, advertisements
  - Reusable tins
  - Usable baking pans or other home or garden items

Give cards that are eco-friendly and save resources.

- Make your own cards.
- Buy cards made from recycled paper (look for "post-consumer" content) and printed in non-toxic inks.
- Buy cards and envelopes that can be recycled in your town. Choose cards printed on white stock without metallic or plastic coatings.
- Buy cards wrapped in the least bulky or most recyclable packaging.
- Substitute postcards for cards that require envelopes.
- Reuse the fronts of old holiday cards as gift tags.

Eat sustainable food and avoid disposable containers and extra packaging.

- Research sustainable food choices in your area and buy locally if possible.
- Buy snacks and beverages in bulk to avoid extra packaging.
- Serve food with washable utensils, plates, and glasses, rather than disposable items.
- Make homemade eggnog, hot chocolate or iced tea in large quantities, and prepare pitchers of ice water in advance to reduce waste from water and soda bottles or cans.

Choose a few of these ideas that will be easy for you to incorporate into your holiday celebration. Not only will you conserve energy and resources, but chances are you will also simplify your life. And you may get more of what we all need at this time of year—time to enjoy our families and friends and to focus on the joys of the season.
Happy Holidays from the Office of Environmental Health & Safety