

Cornell University  
Cooperative Extension



# Family Power



## Curbing Holiday Stress For You And Your Children

by Bobbi Nowak, Community Educator

In looking around at the increased stress of friends and family members this holiday season, I went searching for information from the Mayo Clinic, Southern University of Illinois School of Medicine, ParentingPress.com & Keepkidshealthy.com

Here are some tips for helping you and your children through the stress of the holiday season:

- ♥ Limit video games and TV time—it's easy to fall into this trap when parents are busy trying to get everything prepared for the holidays, don't let the video games or TV become the babysitter
- ♥ Remember routines—school's out, there are extra events and shopping trips, but you still need to pay attention to your child's need for sleep and respect their need to continue routines
- ♥ Keep nutrition in mind—be mindful of the amount of sugar and sweets that your child consumes and pay attention to the amount of times and types of foods that you eat while out
- ♥ Remind your children and yourself to keep a good attitude and to work together to accomplish holiday projects and goals. With older children, encourage them to communicate about how they are feeling; with younger children, pay attention to cues: Are they irritable? Are they falling asleep at irregular times?
- ♥ Take time out from the hustle and bustle to relax—this is good advice for everyone. Share holiday books, sing songs, create some crafts, or watch a movie together. These are great ways to unwind!
- ♥ Keep the kids involved. A lot of times, children are observers in the holiday process because parents find it easier and faster to get things finished. Adjust your schedule to budget in extra time to allow kids to help. They can assist with decorating, purchasing or making gifts, or help with cooking, baking or chores. They can also help by stuffing Christmas card envelopes, wrapping gifts, or by helping out with other siblings.

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## Use LED Christmas Lights - Save Energy and Money

Richard Gast; CCE Programs Assistant - Natural Resources

When we look at energy efficient lighting, more and more people are using Compact Fluorescent Lights (or CFLs), the spiral light bulbs that use about 2/3 less electricity than their incandescent (traditional) counterparts. When it comes to holiday lighting, however, we tend to overlook LEDs (Light Emitting Diodes), which can save a lot of energy -- and a lot of money too.

By some estimates, if every traditional Christmas light in America were replaced with an LED, it would add up to a 400,000-ton reduction in carbon emissions and a \$250 million savings.

If you think that you are paying too much to light your home during the holidays, think about switching over to energy efficient LED Christmas lights. Yes, LED Christmas lights will cost more when you purchase them, but your energy savings will cover the additional cost in just a few seasons.



Consider this. According to the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), at 13.5 cents a kilowatt hour, it will cost you \$36.14 to keep a string of 300 standard (C7) bulbs lit for 6 hours a day for 15 days. Lighting a strand of 300 mini-incandescent twinkle lights will cost you \$1.94. But, it will cost less than 16 cents to operate a strand of 300 LED Christmas lights for the same period of time. What's more, LEDs rarely wear out. By some estimates they will last a lifetime; up to 100,000 hours. And they generate less heat, so they are less of a fire hazard.

More and more retailers are carrying LED Christmas lights, with new colors and styles being introduced all the time. So, save money, save energy. Buy and use LED Christmas lights and limit the time that you display your lights to six hours per evening. Leaving them on all of the time can make your energy costs four times higher. And for safety sake, always disconnect your holiday lights before going to sleep and when leaving home.



# Curbing Holiday Stress...



Important learning happens during these interactive times—reading recipes, measuring, talking about how much or how many things need to be prepared. If there is something that the kids really can't help with then give them another job. Ask them to help with a sibling by teaching them a song or reading them a book.

Overall—families need to set realistic expectations. They need to stick with routines, set a budget, plan ahead, don't try for perfection, and re-think New Year's Resolutions. Make your plan something reasonable and doable.

Parents also need to recognize their own reaction to stress as this can cause additional stress and behavioral issues in children.

## Some signs of too much stress can include:

- ♥ shorter temper than usual
- ♥ disruption in sleep
- ♥ losing interest in things that you normally enjoy
- ♥ overreacting to minor annoyances

When you see these signs, seek help and support. Take time to enjoy what you have and your accomplishments rather than worrying about things you don't have or haven't finished. Dr. Eileen Kennedy-Moore's book, *What About Me? 12 Ways to get your Parents' Attention without Hitting Your Sister*, talks about teaching your children positive ways to respond to feelings and stress.



## Healthy Snack Ideas

- ♥ **Ants on a log** — Spread peanut butter on celery sticks and top with raisins.
- ♥ **Banana ice** — Peel several very ripe bananas, break them into 1-inch pieces, and freeze the pieces in a sealed plastic bag. Just before serving, whirl the pieces in the blender with a small amount of water or juice. Serve right away. Add berries for a different flavor or top with fruit or nuts.
- ♥ **Mini pizzas** — Spoon pizza sauce onto half a bagel, English muffin, or mini pita. Top with low-fat mozzarella cheese and your favorite veggies and toast or bake at a low setting until the cheese is melted and the bagel is crispy.
- ♥ **Healthy ice pops** — Freeze fresh, unsweetened 100% juice in ice pop molds or ice cube trays.
- ♥ **Happy trails mix** — Combine 1 cup whole-grain toasted oat cereal with 1/4 cup chopped walnuts and 1/4 cup dried cranberries for a healthy trail mix.

# Tips to help you and your child eat more fruits and veggies

Jennifer LaShomb, Community Health Intern

How many fruits and vegetables do you eat daily? Are you or your family members eating the 2 cups of fruit and 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups of vegetables every day? By eating more fruits and vegetables as part of a healthy diet can reduce your risk of having certain cancers, heart attacks, or even strokes.

As a parent, you are the first and most important teacher your child will ever have. You have to be a positive role model for your children. What you eat really does have an effect on what your children eat. Here are a few helpful tips to help you and your child eat more fruit and vegetables:

- ♥ Serve fruit peeled and cut with a sprinkle of cinnamon for an extra sweet taste as a snack after school.
- ♥ Always have a fruit bowl full of fresh fruits that are in sight and in reach for a healthy snack anytime.
- ♥ Add fruit cocktail (canned in juice, not syrup) to jell-o molds.
- ♥ Use a blender or a food processor to hide vegetables. Adding vegetables to spaghetti sauce is a great way to get extra servings of veggies. Mash cauliflower into mashed potatoes. Shredded carrots are a nice mix to add to chicken or tuna salad sandwiches.
- ♥ Instead of jelly or jam that are often high in sugar, put sliced bananas or other fruit on top of peanut butter. **Remember, the healthier choice for bread is always whole-wheat.**
- ♥ Top cereal, low-fat yogurt, or low-fat cottage cheese with pieces of fruit such as apples, blueberries, banana, or strawberries.

Are you having a hard time with your children eating fruits or vegetables? Do not be discouraged. Research has shown that it takes at least 10 times of offering a food to a child before accepting it. So, serve new fruits and vegetables on a regular basis. Then encourage, do not force, them to try at least one bite of the new food that is being offered. Keep in mind that most kids do better with a small serving of peas, a small serving of corn, and a small potato as compared to a large serving of just one vegetable. Eventually, they will find a vegetable they like.

To get your children more excited about eating more fruits and vegetables, get them involved in the shopping, cooking, or preparing the foods as much as possible. Children will also be more likely to eat a food they did not like before if they see you or a friend eating it.



# Recipe page: Pina Colada Salad

An easy fruit salad for the holidays

- 1 (20 ounce) can crushed pineapple in juice, undrained
- 1 (3.5 ounce) package instant coconut cream pudding mix
- 1 (12 ounce) container nonfat cottage cheese
- 1 (8 ounce) container nonfat pineapple or lemon yogurt

1. Combine pineapple, pudding mix and cottage cheese together in a large bowl.
2. Stir in yogurt.
3. Cover and chill in the refrigerator for 2 to 3 hours.
4. Sprinkle with shredded coconut and crushed cashews if desired.

12 servings (1/2 cup serving) – 64 calories, 1.8 grams of fat, 25% calories from fat and .3 grams of fiber in a serving.



## Snowman Sandwich

Use 3 different sizes of water glasses to cut out round shapes for your snowman.

- Bread slices
- American cheese slices
- Ham slices
- Light mayonnaise or mustard

1. Cut out round shapes from bread and cheese slices.
2. Put sandwich together with bread, cheese and ham.
3. Decorate with soft pieces of olives, cooked carrots, green peas or pickles.

Recipes from KidFood © 2007 – Nutrition Matters, Inc. The content of KidFood is not intended to provide medical advice; this should be obtained from your health care provider. Reproduction of this publication without a license to copy is a violation of federal copyright law and is prohibited. Nutrition Matters, Inc. 2809 East Hamilton Avenue, Dept. 109, Eau Claire, WI 54701 – www.numatters.com.

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# FREE TAX PREPARATION AVAILABLE IT'S MORE MONEY IN YOUR POCKET!

You may be eligible for FREE tax return preparation this filing season if your total household income is less than \$40,000. Returns will be prepared and electronically totally free of charge at the following locations in Franklin County:

- ♥ United Way of Franklin County 518-481-5341
- ♥ Franklin County OneWorkSource 518-481-5755
- ♥ ComLinks 518-483-1261, ext. 1012
- ♥ Akwesasne Housing Authority 518-358-9020



*You may also qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit!!*

If you have:

*No Children-* Earned Income less than \$12,590, \$14,590 if married filing jointly, your maximum credit could be \$428.

*One Child-* Earned income less than \$33,241, \$35,241 if married filing jointly, your maximum credit could be \$2,853.

*Two or More Children-* Earned Income less than \$37,783, \$39,783 if married filing jointly, your maximum credit could be \$4,716.

*How do I claim this credit?*

File your tax return! Even better, e-file your return! It's simple, secure and more accurate. Both state and federal returns can be prepared at the same time and you will receive your refund even faster!

**Look For THE FRANKLIN COUNTY CA\$H COALITION SUPER SATURDAY  
@ SEACOMM FEDERAL CREDIT UNION 2/2/08 1-6pm  
BOOK YOUR APPT. 1-800-764-0566 FOR FREE INCOME TAX PREP  
BY VITA TRAINED VOLUNTEERS! CALL TODAY!**

# Keep Your Home and Family Safe This Christmas

Richard Gast; Extension Programs Assistant - Horticulture / Natural Resources

Christmas. It's the most wonderful time of the year. So the song says. And so it should be, especially for children. But every year during the holiday season, as many as 9000 people are treated for injuries related to falls, cuts, electric shock and the like, at hospital emergency rooms across America. What's more, between 200 and 500 Christmas tree related fires occur annually, resulting, on average, in between 20 and 40 deaths, 70 to 100 injuries and more than \$15 million in property loss and damage.

Here is a list of safety tips compiled from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Following them can help ensure a happy and safe holiday season for you and your family. Remember, caring about the health, safety and welfare of your children does not make you a Grinch, even if the kids think it does.

## Artificial Trees

When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the words Fire Resistant. This does not mean the tree won't catch fire, but does indicate that the tree will resist burning and should extinguish quickly.

To prevent electrical shock, never use electric decorations on artificial trees with metallic needles, leaves, or branches. Metallic trees can become charged with electricity from faulty lights, and a person touching a branch could be electrocuted.

When purchasing an artificial tree with built-in electrical systems, look for the Underwriters Laboratory (UL) label. No label. No sale.

## Real Christmas Trees

When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. A fresh tree is green, needles are hard to pull from branches and when bent between your fingers, needles do not break. The trunk butt of a fresh tree is sticky with resin, and when tapped on the ground, the tree should not lose many needles.

When setting up a tree at home, place it away from radiators, registers and fireplaces. Heated rooms dry live trees out rapidly. Be sure to keep the tree stand filled with water. Place the tree out of the way and do not block doorways.



Cut a few inches off of the trunk of your tree to expose fresh wood. This allows for better water absorption and will help to keep your tree from drying out and becoming a fire hazard. Put the tree in a sturdy, water-holding stand. Keep the tree stand filled with water so the tree will not dry out quickly. Keep extension cords and light strings away from the water.

For safety's sake, light your tree only when you are at home and awake to enjoy it. Remember that hot bulbs can ignite dry tree branches. To avoid disaster, keep trees well watered and, as an extra precaution, keep a fire extinguisher handy, and be sure your home's smoke detectors have new batteries and that they're working properly.

Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens (Wreaths. Centerpieces) Always use nonflammable holders and place candles out of children's reach.

### **All Trees**

Always use the proper step stool or ladder to reach high places.

Use only noncombustible or flame-resistant materials to trim a tree. Choose tinsel or artificial icicles of plastic or nonleaded metals. Leaded materials are hazardous if ingested by children.

Take special care to avoid decorations that are sharp. Keep in mind that glass ornaments are breakable. Young children are particularly at risk for injury from glass ornaments, sharp objects, or from well-intentioned gifts of toys that are not age appropriate. Keep ornaments and trimmings with small removable parts out of the reach of young children to avoid the child swallowing or inhaling small pieces, and avoid ornaments that resemble candy or food, which may tempt a child to eat them.

Never place lighted candles on a tree or near any flammable materials.

### **Lighting Tips**

Make sure all lights you purchase contain the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) label, which means they meet UL safety requirements. And, while you're reading labels, be sure you're buying the right set--for indoor use, outdoor use, or both.

Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, cracked insulation or loose connections. Throw out or return damaged sets.

Don't overload your electrical circuits. Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord.

All outdoor cords, plugs and sockets must be weatherproof. Check labels to be sure they have been certified for outdoor use. Keep electrical connections off the ground, and make sure wiring is kept clear of drainpipes and railings to prevent any risk of shock. Use a ground fault circuit interrupter on each circuit.

## Safe Christmas Tips

Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house walls, or other firm supports to protect the lights from wind damage. Use insulated staples to hold strings in place, not nails or tacks. Or run strings of lights through hooks (available at hardware stores).

Plug all outdoor electric decorations into circuits with ground fault circuit interrupters to avoid potential shocks.

Indoor extension cords should be placed against the wall to avoid tripping hazards, but do not run cords under rugs.

Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house.

### Toys

Before buying a toy or allowing your child to play with a toy that he has received as a gift, read the instructions carefully. If the toy is appropriate for your child, show him how to use it properly.

Follow recommended age ranges on toy packages. Toys that are too advanced could pose a safety hazard for younger children.

Children under age three can choke on small parts contained in toys or games. Government regulations specify that toys for children under age three cannot have parts less than 1 1/4 inches in diameter and 2 1/4 inches long.

Children under age 8 can choke or suffocate on balloons that are not inflated or are broken. Remove strings and ribbons from toys before giving them to young children.

Watch for pull toys with strings that are more than 12 inches in length. They could present a strangulation hazard for babies.

If you will be visiting with family or friends during the holidays, remember that the homes you visit may not be child safety proofed. Keep an eye out for potential hazards and danger. Be sure to clean up immediately after a holiday party. A toddler rising early could come in contact with alcohol or tobacco, or choke on leftover food, wrappers or small objects that have been left behind.

Keep this Christmas season merry. Follow these safety tips to help ensure a happy and safe holiday season for you and your family.



# Here are a few simple ways to increase the amount of exercise in your daily routine:

Jennifer LaShomb, Community Health Intern

- ♥ Park the car as far away from the entrance as possible. Getting a few extra steps in every time you enter and exit a building can really add up.
- ♥ Tidy up your house. Cleaning is an excellent way to be active and you are killing two birds with one stone: exercising and getting your house clean! Cleaning your windows is perfect way to work your upper body.
- ♥ Walk the dog.
- ♥ Pace while you are talking on the telephone.
- ♥ March in place while you are watching television.
- ♥ Dance whenever possible. If you are out for a night on the town, bust a move on the dance floor. Dancing burns calories and it is fun!
- ♥ Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- ♥ Hide your remote control. Instead of exercising your thumb while watching television, exercise your body! Get up to change the channel.
- ♥ Work outdoors; shoveling is a beneficial, low impact way to burn some calories.

Do you like to walk but feel there is no place to do it?

- ♥ The public walking program at Malone Middle School is a free program to those who live in the Malone school district and are at least 18 years old. It is open on days that school is in session from 3:30pm-8:30 pm. If you would like more information, contact Betsy Brabon at 483-7801.
- ♥ The YMCA scholarship program is for people who have a limited income. All you have to do is ask for a scholarship application, fill it out, and make an appointment to compromise on a rate that you can afford. For more information, contact the local YMCA at 483-2354.

Just remember that every extra step is one-step closer  
to becoming a healthier you!

# Feeding Wild Winter Birds is Fun!

Richard Gast; Extension Programs Assistant - Horticulture CCE Franklin County

Not only is bird feeding fun, it helps birds get through the winter, when food is often buried under the deep snow and hard to find. You can take pleasure and pride in helping your feathered friends survive the harsh winter months. But, the decision to feed wild birds should not be a casual one. The birds that come to your feeders will become dependent on them as a regular place to eat. They will be relying on you for their survival. So, you have to keep them full.



One of the most familiar and beloved birds in northern North America, the Black-capped Chickadee is a frequent visitor to bird feeders.

It is best to use feeders that keep seed dry, and to establish feeding stations in areas that are sheltered and that provide natural cover for birds as they wait for their turn to feed. Tray feeders should be placed near the ground; hopper and tube feeders hung or suspended from tree limbs. Be sure, when you place them, that your feeders are in locations that you can access easily, even in deep snow, and where discarded seed husks and critter droppings will not be a problem.

You will be spending your hard earned money on birdseed, so spend it wisely. Most area birders agree that black oil sunflower seeds, with their large, meaty centers and thin shells that are easy to crack, are the preferred choice of chickadees, finches, cardinals, grosbeaks, sparrows, and many other wild birds. Black oil sunflower seeds are extremely nutritious and high in fat content, as well.

Suet is another first-rate energy food for birds. It is inexpensive and often available at butcher counters in supermarkets. Or you can make your own. Contact Richard at Cornell Cooperative Extension, (518) 483-7403, for a list of suet recipes you can prepare using shortening. The birds, especially woodpeckers, absolutely love suet. Just keep in mind that suet can become rancid when temperatures rise.

It is a good practice to clean your feeders regularly too, by washing them with hot soapy water and disinfectant, taking into account that wood may become faded or discolored when exposed to bleach. You can wash your feeders by hand using a pail or, if you prefer, you can place them in the dishwasher.

If you put out a feeder and find that no birds come to it, don't be discouraged. It may take time for them to find it. Keep in mind, too, that in times of mild weather, you may see a decrease in activity at your feeder. When there is an abundant supply of available food in the wild, birds will often consume the wild food first. But, accumulations of snow will bring them back.

If you find enjoyment in feeding birds, you can go on feeding them year round. Consider buying a bird book or field guide to help with identification and binoculars to help you better study them.



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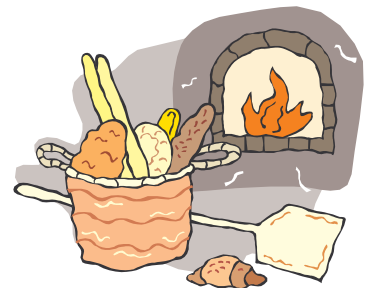
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## Should I Use My Oven to Heat My Home?

Richard Gast; Extension Programs Assistance

It is best not to use your oven to heat your home. Electric ovens are not designed for space heating and the exposed elements can be a safety hazard. If the oven is gas, the unvented fumes, which include carbon monoxide (CO), can be sickening, or even lethal.



Each year in the United States, more than 500 people die from unintentional CO poisoning, according to the National Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Besides, using an oven is an inefficient way to heat. And it's how a lot of fires start in the winter.

If you will be without fuel for an extended period of time, you might want to consider staying with family or friends, particularly if there are infants or elderly people in your household. Find a friend to take your pets in and care for them.

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