



Wellness-Fitness Program Newsletter



DECEMBER 2007

Safe Toys and Gifts Month

If you're buying gifts for children this year, take some time when selecting the toys you give. The right toy can help children develop imagination and coordination. But the wrong one can cause serious injuries – or worse.

Although age ranges are written on the packaging of many toys, keep in mind that children vary in abilities and maturity.

These simple guidelines from The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission can help keep the holiday season safe for youngsters.

- Avoid toys that shoot or contain parts that fly off. Slingshots and high-powered water guns can injure targeted children. BB guns should not be considered toys.
- Inspect toys for sound construction. They should be made of durable materials, have no sharp edges or points, and should withstand impact.
- Don't give toys with small parts to young children. Youngsters tend to put things in their mouths, increasing the risk of choking.
- Select toys to suit a child's age, abilities, skill, and interest level.
- Avoid toys that make loud or shrill noise to avoid serious ear injury.
- Choose well-made stuffed animals. The eyes, noses, and other small parts of stuffed animals should be securely fastened – it's okay to gently pull on these parts to ensure safety.
- Never buy hobby kits, such as chemistry sets, for children younger than age 12. Provide

proper supervision for those children 12 to 15 years of age and older who play with such toys.

- Avoid toys with electric heating elements for children under 8 years of age.
- Read instructions carefully and follow suggested age levels. Age labeling is provided for developmental and safety reasons.

Consider some of these age-appropriate toys:

- Infants to 1 year old: activity quilts, stuffed animals without button noses and eyes, bath toys, and squeaky toys.
- 1 to 2 years old: books, blocks, fit-together toys, balls, and push-and-pull toys.
- 2 to 5 years old: non-toxic art supplies, books, videos, musical instruments, and outdoor toys like a baseball tee stand.
- 5 to 9 years old: bicycles, crafts, jump ropes, inline skates, and sports equipment and appropriate safety equipment to use with sports equipment.
- 10 to 14 years old: computers, microscopes, board games, and sports equipment.

Finally, make a list of safety rules and share them with your children. If your youngsters are playing with friends, remind everyone of your safety rules.

Learn more at the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission Website at www.cpsc.gov.

Washing Your Hands is Key to Staying Well

Washing your hands seems like such a simple task. But hand-washing, if not an art, is certainly a bit of a science we all need brushing up on. In fact, washing your hands is so important that the week of December 2nd has been declared National Hand-washing Awareness Week.

Many people don't wash their hands as often or as well as they should. And not washing properly can spread disease causing germs.

So when should you wash your hands? To keep you and other people safe, be sure you wash your hands:

- Before preparing or eating food.
- Before and after tending to someone who is sick.
- After going to the bathroom.
- After changing diapers or cleaning a child who has gone to the bathroom.
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- After handling an animal or animal waste.
- After handling garbage.
- Before and after treating a cut or wound.

To wash your hands properly, follow this advice:

- Wash in warm or hot running water. Hot water is much more effective than cold at dissolving oils and dirt on your skin's surface.
- Use soap. Soap works to break up and dissolve the substances -- primarily mucus,

fecal material, and food residue -- that are likely to contain disease-causing germs.

- Rub your lathered hands together for about 15 seconds (a rule of thumb is to scrub for as long as it takes to sing the "happy birthday" song all the way through). The rubbing action helps to further loosen any material still adhering to the skin. Remember to clean the palms and back of your hands, between fingers and around and under finger nails, and any rings you wear.
- Dry your hands.

If soap and clean water are not available, use an alcohol-based product to clean your hands. When using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer:

- Apply product to the palm of one hand.
- Rub hands together.
- Rub the product over all surfaces of hands and fingers until your hands are dry.

Remember, washing your hands protects you and others from preventable disease.

For more information about hand-washing visit the Website of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at www.cdc.gov/cleanhands.

Only he who can see the invisible can do the impossible.

- Frank L. Gaines

Conquer Your Holiday Dietary Challenges

Between the parties and the cookie platters, the travel and the cocktails — plus the stress of it all — maintaining your weight over the holidays is never a piece of cake. But it can be done.

Here are several strategies to help you maintain your weight during this festive, and busy, time.

Develop a healthy mantra

During December, many people give up the goals they've been trying to maintain throughout the year, such as eating healthfully. But your year long health habits should stick with you through the season.

To stick to your guns, adopt this mantra: "I want to live every day as the healthiest person I can." Bring that attitude into the holiday season, and hold the image of yourself as a healthy person. To stay focused, repeat your mantra to yourself daily, before office parties, and other holiday events.

Postpone eating and drinking

Because holiday parties can go on for hours, the sooner you start eating and drinking, the more time you have to consume. To close that window of opportunity and eat and drink less, have something nonalcoholic, such as diet soda, as your first drink. Likewise, with food, delay eating until it's almost the end of the event, if you can.

Don't chat and chew

Once you give yourself the go-ahead to dig in, realize that the first bites of any food are the most flavorful. You can get the same level of satisfaction with 2 bites of crackers and cheese dip, for example, as you can with 20 bites.

With this in mind, take just a little bit of food at the buffet or appetizer table, and then sit down to savor each and every bite. What you don't want to do is fill up your plate then start to chat. Before you know it, you'll have an empty plate and barely a memory of having eaten.

Don't skip meals

On party days, don't skip meals or under-eat to "save up" calories for the party. Doing so will work against you because by the time the party rolls around, you'll be starving and you'll eat much more than you otherwise would have.

Also, skipping meals is never a good option because long periods of fasting alters metabolism. Habitually skipping meals can ultimately cause your metabolism to slow down and conserve its fat stores.

A better bet is to eat normally during the day, just like you would if you didn't have a holiday party to attend. Plus, eating regular meals revs up your metabolism and can keep you from nibbling on holiday treats coworkers bring to share.

The American Diabetes Association has good advice on how to plan healthier holiday menus at <http://diabetes.org/nutrition-and-recipes/holiday-meals.jsp>.

To learn more about successful weight control programs, visit the Weight-control Information Network at the National Institutes of Health Website at <http://win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/choosing.htm>.

Conquer Your Holiday Fitness Challenges

Keeping your weight in check during the holidays can be a struggle. Cookie platters and cheese trays lurk around every corner. Plus, jam-packed holiday schedules can interfere with your regular fitness routine.

Still, there are ways to squeeze in physical activity and workouts so that by January, you're not faced with extra pounds and lapsed exercise habits that require lots of physical and mental energy to revamp.

First, identify a specific, motivating goal and let that guide you. If, for example, you want to lose 10 pounds by your next birthday, keep that goal at the top of your mind as you're attending holiday parties. Write it down and post it in a visible spot as a reminder.

Here are some common obstacles to sticking with an exercise routine and suggestions for overcoming them.

You're too tired from partying and shopping to work out

On days you feel you're too tired to work out, push through your exhaustion and exercise anyway. Sound impossible? Not if you remind yourself of your goal.

You're traveling a lot

To stay disciplined when you're away from your normal routine, keep your goal in mind and take your workout along. Pack some resistance bands in your suitcase so you can do a workout in your

hotel room or at a relative's house. And when you're stuck waiting for a plane, walk around the airport instead of sitting at the gate.

You've got too much to do and no time to exercise

During the holidays, your to-do list can balloon, of course. But there's always time to do something active—even if you just go for a walk on your lunch hour.

Giving in to giving up

A defeatist attitude, such as "I've already blown it, so I might as well just stop going to the gym until January," is easy to give in to with all the forces of the holidays conspiring against you. If you overindulge during the holidays or skip your workout, don't tell yourself you've ruined everything. Tomorrow, just get right back on track.

Remember, the wellness professionals at your Federal Occupational Health (FOH) Wellness/Fitness Center are there to help and motivate you before, during, and after the holidays – every step of the way.

Get more information about keeping your holiday season healthy from the CDC's Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity holiday tips webpage at www.cdc.gov/nccdpdp/dnpa/spotlights/holiday_tips.htm.

FOH, the Occupational Health Provider of Choice for the Federal Government

The mission of FOH is to improve the health, safety, and productivity of the federal workforce. Created by Congress in 1946, FOH is a non-appropriated service agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Program Support Center.

Federal agencies throughout the U.S. and overseas can access FOH services. FOH provides worksite health services, Wellness/Fitness, Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), Work/Life, Environmental Health and Safety, Organizational and Professional Development, and Training and Education.

Contact FOH at **(800) 457-9808** or visit us at www.foh.dhhs.gov.
