



Pasco County Wellness Newsletter

By Pasco County Employees, For Pasco County Employees

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Tips for Reducing Holiday Stress

By Cliff Gill

Why do many people feel more stress at this time of year? We tend to blame worsening traffic, crowded malls and incessant commercials pushing holiday consumption. But, a key culprit is our own memories, according to Ronald Nathan, PhD, clinical professor at Albany Medical College in New York. "When we think about the holidays, we dwell on the past and what went wrong, or we romanticize it and make it impossible to re-create," he says.

He counsels people to not drive themselves crazy finding the perfect gift or planning the perfect party. "Instead," he says, "lower your expectations and overestimate, rather than underestimate, your time."

Stress and the immune system

Easing up on yourself over the holidays is important because the connection between stress and illness is real, says Simon A. Rego, PsyD, an assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Albert Einstein College of Medicine. "The controversy that stress causes disease is pretty much over. We're now figuring out how stress does it," he says. New studies explain how stress weakens the immune system and makes it more vulnerable to a host of ailments.

Health effects of stress

When your holiday to-do list stretches longer than Santa Claus's beard, eliminate whatever is unnecessary. Doing so may reduce your risk of heart attacks, skin conditions (psoriasis and shingles), digestive disorder flare-ups, immune disorders (flare-ups of multiple sclerosis and lupus), anxiety, depression, insomnia and pain disorders (arthritis, back pain, and muscle spasms).

As for McVey, she's paring down her holiday expectations. "I'm planning to take a day off and enjoy the Christmas atmosphere."

Source: WebMD

*Stress Reducing Recipe
for the Holidays*

- ★ Start and end your day with **Gratitude**
- ★ Eat a **Healthy Breakfast**
- ★ Keep **Healthy Snacks** with you
- ★ Eat a Light **Snack before Holiday Parties**
- ★ **Exercise** every day even for 15 minutes
- ★ Get enough **Rest**
- ★ **Smile and Laugh** at least 3x/day
- ★ Spend **Quality Time** with Loved Ones
- ★ **Help** Someone In Need
- ★ **Lower Expectations** for yourself and others

A Christmas Carol and Your Health

By Greg Giordano

I have read Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" dozens of times over the years. I have seen countless big and little screen adaptations. I would venture to say it is my favorite Christmas story of all time. Perhaps, it is my favorite story, period. The rich descriptions of the Christmas season during the early years of Queen Victoria's reign over Great Britain, which led to the rebirth of Christmas celebrations during subsequent years, created an indelible picture in the minds of millions of what Christmas should be. The advent of classic literary characters such as Ebenezer Scrooge, Bob Cratchit, Tiny Tim and Marley's Ghost stitched together the overarching theme of sin, repentance and redemption. The importance of family and friends coming together at the holidays was also a recurring theme of the story. The end result is that Dickens left to history perhaps one of the most influential literary works of its time; its impact felt the world over.

One thing that is often overlooked in the book is the vivid descriptions of food and drink. From the most meager of Christmas dinners as celebrated by the Cratchits, to the most opulent of feasts as presented the Ghost of Christmas Present, food played a central role in the story and in the daily lives of the British. Dickens went into great detail describing the meals celebrated by rich and poor alike. The contrast was stark, but in all cases, the most scantily laid table was treated with as much reverence by the poor family as was the fully loaded table and sideboard by the well-to-do.

Can we find a connection between holiday food celebrations of the past with healthy eating habits today? How did the Christmas feast for those with means compare to those without? When Scrooge first meets the Ghost of Christmas Present, he enters his own antechamber to find food "heaped upon the floor.



Continued Christmas Carol

There were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, great joints of meat, sucking pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense twelfth cakes and seething bowls of punch..."

Later in the same chapter, Scrooge is allowed to observe the Christmas festivities of his clerk, Bob Cratchit and family, whose most famous member is Tiny Tim, the little boy with a crutch whose limbs were supported by an iron frame. Their meal is described as a small goose with sage and onion for stuffing and gravy, mashed potatoes, applesauce, a drink of hot lemon and gin and a Christmas pudding. Not much food for seven people, but enough to feed an appreciative family.



For the poor, meat and poultry in any form was a luxury, often available only at Christmas time. Victorian era children lived on "dripping, bread, tea and vegetables." The poorest of the poor ate "potato pairings & rotten vegetables." The price of this poor diet was primarily stunted growth and ill health. For the wealthy, meat, cheese and bacon were part of their daily diet. No doubt, gout and other illnesses which plagued the rich were due, at least in part, to the consumption of red meat, seafood and alcohol on a regular basis, all foodstuffs that were staples of the wealthy table.

Continue reading on page 3

A Christmas Carol continued

“A Christmas Carol” was a product of the 1840’s. Sanitation and refrigeration were not readily available to all classes of people. Perhaps, if they had been, meats in all forms would not have been almost exclusively the domain of the wealthy. However, the one common theme between the rich and the poor diet is the presence of fruit. Whether found on the table of the wealthy, or a simple apple sauce on the side for needier families, fruit is one food that appealed to most people of the era. Ask any health-conscious person of today if fruit is important and you will undoubtedly be told that fruit is one thing we should all be eating more of. For a red meat eater such as myself, I can take away from this little tale the lesson that I too need to eat more fruit!

Have a blessed Christmas and holiday season! If you have not yet read “A Christmas Carol,” give it a try. It will change your life.

Sources: Charles Dickens: "A Christmas Carol," Public Domain "Victorian Food," www.victorianchildren.org

"Gout-friendly Meals" by Alyssa Sparacino writing for www.health.com

This Month’s Healthy Trivia Questions for Volume 2, Issue 8

1. The best-selling Christmas song ever is:
 - A) Here Comes Santa Claus
 - B) Jingle Bells
 - C) White Christmas
 - D) Silent Night
 - E) Merry Christmas, Santa

2. Which department store created "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer":
 - A) Gimbels
 - B) Montgomery Ward
 - C) Marshall Field
 - D) Woolworth’s
 - E) Macy’s

3. In the movie “It’s A Wonderful Life,” George Bailey’s guardian angel is:
 - A) Michael
 - B) Gabriel
 - C) Daniel
 - D) Clarence
 - E) Joshua

*Last months Trivia Contest Winner: Rose Marino from Utilities Department.
Congratulations!!*

Please send in your answers; winner will be entered in a drawing to win a prize. Please email your answers to: cgill@pascocountyfl.net

Quotes and Tidbits

Some Christmas Tidbits

- Norwegian Scientist have hypothesized that Rudolph's red nose is probably the result of a parasitic infection of his respiratory system.
- In A.D. 350, Pope Julius I, bishop of Rome, proclaimed December 25 the official celebration date for the birthday of Christ.
- Santa Claus is based on a real person, St. Nikolas of Myra, Born in Patara (turkey).
- Kris Kringle really lives in the North Pole, drives a 1984 Ford Temp and delivers Pizza instead of working in the toy shop.

How many calories did you eat on Thanksgiving?

More than you think I'd wager. Here are some shocking numbers:

- On average, a woman needs 2,000 calories each day.
- On average, a man needs 3,000 calories each day.
- The typical Thanksgiving meal (turkey, side dishes, and dessert) contains 5,000 to 6,000 calories.

In other words, Americans consumed 2-3 times the recommended daily intake of calories on Thanksgiving Day.

Another statistic: the amount of calories needed for the body to create one extra pound of fat: 3,500. Put another way, we ate enough extra calories to add extra 1-2 pounds of fat in less than 24 hours.

Now you also know why the average American usually puts on some extra pounds over the holidays.

Source: Premier Choice Fitness



A healthy family life requires frequent use of three phrases:
"May I? Thank you, and I'm sorry"
 and
"never, never, never end the day without making peace."

Pope Francis



[Health Department Information](#)



The Florida Department of Health in Pasco County offers a wide range of services that focus on improving and maintaining the health of residents and visitors as individuals and facilitates change in the community at multiple levels. Our collaborative efforts prevent disease and injury, improve health and enhance quality of life.

Wellness Programs

- Healthiest Weight
- Health Education
- Tobacco Prevention
- Chronic Disease Prevention
- Injury Prevention



You are invited to join the drop5 Team Challenge! Kick start 2016 by getting to your healthiest weight. drop5 is a team challenge to lose 5% of your team's combined weight between January 18th and April 10th. There is no cost to participate.

drop5 is a community wide event. Teams are welcome from everywhere and can range in size from a minimum of 4 members to a maximum of 200 members.

Team Challenge activities will vary based on your teams interest and what your Captain arranges. drop5 will provide a resource list that includes a variety of free and paid resources that are available to supplement your program as well as weekly motivational e-mails. The rest is up to you. Teams and their Captains can plan as many support activities or as few as they wish. Team Captains coordinate the team weigh-ins. Collective team weights are submitted at registration, at 6 weeks and at the end of the program.

If you would like to be a Captain gather up your team and commit to drop5! Please e-mail Christopher.Mullens@flhealth.gov to be added to the distribution list. You will receive Captain's instructions and a link to register your team.

Set Goals

Many Americans gain between 1 and 5 pounds each holiday season. While it might not sound like much, most people never manage to lose those extra pounds.

With balance and moderation, you can enjoy the holidays the healthy way! Choose fresh fruit as a festive and sweet substitute for candy. Limit fats, salt, and sugary foods. Find fun ways to stay active, such as dancing to your favorite holiday music. Be active for at least 2½ hours a week. Help kids and teens be active for at least 1 hour a day.

UPCOMING EVENTS FROM THE PASCO COUNTY HEALTHY DEPARTMENT 727-861-5250 OR
PASCO.WEB@FLHEALTH.GOV

[Our New Healthy Recipe page](#)

Accordion Potatoes

For seriously satisfying spuds, try these vitamin-rich reds. Creamier than russets and lower in starch, all they need is a drizzle of olive oil before roasting; sprinkle with parsley and thyme and serve

Ingredients

- 8 large red potatoes
- 2tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. coarsely ground black pepper
- 1 tbsp. chopped fresh parsley leaves
- 1 tsp. chopped fresh thyme leaves



Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 450 degrees F. Carefully slice each potato thinly without cutting all the way through.
2. Place potatoes on microwave-safe dish and cover with waxed paper. Cook in microwave on High 12 to 15 minutes or until easily pierced with tip of knife.
3. Transfer potatoes to metal baking pan. Carefully drizzle oil between slices. Sprinkle with 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper. Roast in oven 25 minutes or until lightly browned. Transfer potatoes to platter; sprinkle with herbs.

[SEND ME A HEALTHY RECIPE FOR NEXT MONTHS NEWSLETTER!!!](#)

DRUSSO@PASCOCOUNTYFL.NET

EXERCISE INFO

My article this month covers how to stay active while on vacation for the holidays. Just because you're away from your home gym doesn't mean you can't exercise. This is one of the best times of the year to be active, for you can enjoy the outdoor weather wherever you are – even in the cold. Take advantage of the wintry scenery, the falling snow or the leaves changing colors by taking a brisk walk. See if your family or friends have free weights to use or improvise with a heavy object that you can handle for a short workout. A great way to bond with loved ones is to ask them to walk with you. My family and I walked during our Thanksgiving vacation. If you're in a hotel or other multi-story building, take the stairs instead of the elevator. Do these activities daily to burn off extra calories caused by overeating.

Here are some activity tips:

Start with two sets of squats. Roll your arms in circles eight times for two sets. Follow with some sit ups. Lift your suitcase or laptop bag like a free weight above your shoulders and complete two sets of eight. Do some yoga stretching exercises. Walk in place in the morning and in the evening for several minutes. Take a brisk walk or jog.



Do these exercises when the rest of the family is busy or asleep so you can concentrate on releasing the holiday stress.

Have a Merry Christmas! Enjoy and cherish all your family time.

By Debbie Russo

LOOK FOR A NEW EXERCISE NEXT MONTH!!

Check out our Wellness Centers. They will help you meet your goals. The Center is open to all Pasco County employees, spouses and dependents on the health insurance plan. 866-959-9355.

Also need other assistance we have the EAP program which helps with issues you're having with stress, financial, and depression. Call 800-272-7255 or www.guidanceresources.com.

Please check out PascoCounty360, the Official Newsletter of Pasco County Government. It has lots of great information on what is happening in our county. Find the link on our Pasco County home page.

Testimonials

This was a good newsletter- great tips! Thank you for all your efforts! *Aphrodite*

Love the advice about not eating homemade foods as part of the effort to eliminate calories and overeating during the holidays! No brainer that this step avoids both hurt feelings and needless calories. Another good newsletter! *Barbara Spaulding*

Contact our writers for suggestions and comments.

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!!!