

## Surviving the Holidays

The holiday season is a joyous time for family and festivities, but it can also be an emotional time when we feel stress, sadness and fatigue. This year, we feel the added pressure of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Whether it's dealing with difficult relationships, managing anger or juggling schedules, help is available. Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center shares some tips for making your holiday brighter and less stressful.

### Safe Holiday Practices

Traditional holiday gatherings with family and friends are fun but can increase the chances of getting or spread-

ing COVID-19 or the flu. The safest way to celebrate this year is with people in your household. If you do plan to gather with people outside your household, take steps to make your celebration safer.

- **Wear a mask** that covers your mouth and nose.
- **Stay at least six feet away from others** who do not live with you (about two arm lengths).
- **Wash your hands often** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Keep hand sanitizer (at least 60 percent alcohol) with you and use it when you are unable to wash your hands.

If you do attend a gathering or host others at your home, limit the number of guests and gather outdoors, or open windows if indoors. Limit the number of people preparing and serving food, and always clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and items between uses.

### Consider These Alternate Holiday Activities:

- Safely prepare holiday dishes and deliver them to family and neighbors in a way that does not involve contact with others (for example, leave them on the porch).



- Participate in a holiday activity with family members, like making paper snowflakes, decorating stockings or

building gingerbread houses. Schedule a time to share a meal together virtually. Have people share recipes and show

their holiday dishes they prepared.



## Maintain, Don't Gain

During the holidays, many people struggle with the ongoing challenge of healthy eating. The average American gains one to two pounds every year between Halloween and New Year's Day. Here are some tips for enjoying holiday festivities without expanding your waistline:

- Plan activities that don't focus on food and try to incorporate movement into each day.
- You can still savor a slice of pumpkin pie, but serve yourself smaller portions of foods that are high in fat and sugar content.
- Try new recipes with dark, leafy greens, squashes and root vegetables that the whole family can enjoy.
- Choose boiled shrimp or veggies and dip instead of cheese or fried foods. And watch your intake of fat and "empty calories" that can be found in sweets, eggnog and dressing.



- If you drink alcohol, limit to one alcoholic drink for women or two drinks for men, then switch to water. Alcohol is high in calories.

Studies show that significant weight loss can greatly reduce or eliminate

obesity-related illnesses such as diabetes and heart disease. If you are struggling to lose weight, Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center offers surgical and non-surgical weight-loss options that can also provide benefits to overall health. Our staff will

help you decide the weight loss option that is right for you and your weight loss goals.

For more information, visit [FSRegional.com/Bariatrics](https://FSRegional.com/Bariatrics).



## Resolve to Make a Change

If weight loss and healthy eating are part of your 2021 resolutions, Fort Sanders Center for Bariatric Surgery is here to help. The center is accredited as a Comprehensive Center by the Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program and offers:

- Therapeutic diet education for chronic health conditions, including diabetes, hypertension, kidney disease and heart disease
- Nutrition counseling for weight management
- Bariatric surgery, nutrition and insurance consultations
- Weekly meetings with a nurse practitioner
- Monthly support groups and health education classes
- Lab testing
- Optional B12 injections

To learn more about surgical and non-surgical options or to view the 2021 informational bariatric seminar dates visit [FSRegional.com/Bariatrics](https://FSRegional.com/Bariatrics) or call (865) 541-4500.



## Bah, Humbug! Got Anger?

The holiday season brings out added stressors, and it can be easy to get angry quickly. Anger is often thought of as a negative emotion, so people are not always taught to deal with it effectively. Here are some tips to help you handle anger more constructively:

- **Relax.** Breathe deeply, repeat calming words or visualize a relaxing place.
- **Use logic.** Remember that getting angry is not going to fix things and that

much of the stress that you are facing is a part of daily life.

- **Cool down.** Before dealing with the person who is making you angry, release energy by taking some time by yourself. Try going for a walk.
- **Communicate.** When having a conflict with another person, listen carefully to the meaning behind what the person is trying to say instead of immediately reacting.

- **Be aware.** Learn to recognize your triggers. Mentally prepare yourself for a situation that tends to make you angry or try to avoid the situation altogether.

If your anger is severely out of control or has a large impact on everyday life, you may need professional help. Talk with your doctor if you are concerned.

### Understanding Anger

Anger is an emotion that says something is wrong. It can be expressed to tell

others about your personal limits, values, rules and boundaries. Learning how to express anger assertively and constructively can improve your personal interaction and your health.

Being angry and expressing it is normal and healthy. However, most people are taught at an early age that such expression is unacceptable. The following habits or tendencies also can indicate hidden anger: excessive irritability over little things, chronically stiff or sore neck or shoulder muscles, being overpolite, anxiety attacks, heart palpitations, panic attacks or compulsive overeating, overworking or over-exercising.

The best way to express

anger in a positive or constructive way is to recognize the emotions you are feeling. Own the feeling of anger – if another person said or did something to cause you anger, the feeling is still yours. Learn and practice ways to express and manage anger to better handle heated moments.

For help with dealing with anger or other emotional stress, contact Peninsula Behavioral Health, a member of Covenant Health, at (865) 970-9800.

Visit [PeninsulaBehavioralHealth.org/Guide](https://PeninsulaBehavioralHealth.org/Guide) for more tips on having a happier holiday season.



*Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center*

*wishes you and your family a wonderful holiday season and a happy new year.*