

SAD Holiday?

Now is the time that Seasonal Affective Disorder kicks in for many. It's estimated that four to six percent of Americans fall victim to this disorder every year.

Symptoms include difficulty concentrating, low energy and fatigue, a decreased interest in daily activities, moodiness, irritability, and increased sleep. The exact cause of SAD is still unknown, but researchers suspect that an increased level of melatonin in the blood could be a factor. Melatonin increases the need and desire to sleep, and because SAD affects people during the colder, darker months, the body produces more of it.



To combat SAD:

- ▶ Increase the amount of light in your home by keeping blinds or drapes open.
- ▶ Get outside; walk outdoors on sunny days, even during winter months.
- ▶ Exercise regularly; physical exercise helps relieve stress and anxiety.
- ▶ Take a trip! If possible, take winter vacations to sunny, warm destinations.

Cure for the "Brrr"

Did you know that when you drink very cold beverages, you are basically forcing your digestive system to slow down or even stop? Alternative medicine practitioners suggest drinking hot water upon awakening in the morning, and continuing to do so throughout

the day. This is thought to strengthen metabolism and enhance digestion. Adding lemon, honey, or lime can help hot water go down easier. This is a good habit to get into year-round, but will be especially pleasant in the dead of winter.

Timely Tips for Holiday Feasts

Parties, family dinners, and other gatherings where food is served are all part of the holiday cheer. But the merriment can change to misery if food makes you or others ill. There are four main rules to keep in mind:

- 1) Be Clean** – The first and perhaps most important thing to keep in mind is that everything needs to be cleaned before food comes in contact with it – your hands, countertops, utensils. Rinse raw fruits and vegetables before slicing and use a produce brush to remove surface dirt.
- 2) Keep Separate** – Place raw meat, poultry, seafood and their juices away from other foods that won't be cooked. Also, remember to use different plates for raw meat and cooked meat.
- 3) Cook Thoroughly** – Color is not a reliable indicator of doneness. Use a food thermometer to accurately check temperature. A turkey is done when it reaches 180°F and its stuffing must be at 165°F. Something else to keep in mind is that raw cookie dough and cake batter are NOT safe to eat, because they contain raw eggs, which can carry Salmonella bacteria and make you very ill.



4) The Chill Factor – Refrigerate foods quickly, because harmful bacteria grow rapidly at room temperature. Leftovers and takeout foods should be refrigerated within 2 hours. When defrosting, never do so at room temperature. Defrost only in the refrigerator, under cold running water, or in the microwave.



Don't Be Like Santa – Stay Trim During The Holiday Season!

Did you know that an 8-ounce glass of eggnog contains 340 calories? Do you like pecan pie? A slice is 500 calories. And if you're a fan of martinis, add a whopping 510 calories! Need some help when it comes to overindulging? Try out these easy tips to avoid the winter weight gain:

- Watch your portion size! Use a smaller plate and remember, you need not eat every single thing that is served.
- Eat a healthy meal and drink a full glass of water before attending a party; this helps you steer clear of high-calorie drinks, snacks, and desserts.
- Choose sweet potatoes instead of mashed; they are lower in calories and are more nutritious.
- Take a family walk before or after your holiday meal; it's a great way to bond with those you love while getting the exercise you need!

Stress-Free Holiday Budgeting

With proper budgeting and a handful of smart shopping ideas, it *is* possible to find the perfect gift for everyone on your list and stay within your budget. Here are a few tips to help you stick to your holiday budget and help manage your holiday financial stress:

- **Make a list and check it twice!** Does everyone on your list really need to be there? A phone call, holiday card, or homemade cookies can feel just as special as a store-bought gift.
- **Set limits.** Write down a maximum dollar limit for each person you want to buy for.

- **Shop online.** With gas prices skyrocketing, this may end up being the most cost-effective option. Find a site that offers free shipping.
- **Be realistic.** A good rule of thumb is to leave your credit cards at home. If you don't have the cash for it, don't buy it!
- **Get a holiday job.** Many places are looking for extra help during the holidays, so it's a great way to fatten your bank account. Plus, some retailers will give you an employee discount, which further helps your budget!

Ah-Choo! Is it the Flu?

To avoid the pain and misery of the flu season, you might want to think about getting a flu shot. Those most at risk are people ages 65 and older, children 6-23 months old, people with chronic health problems or with an illness that affects the immune system, and women who will be at least 3 months pregnant during the flu season. In addition, people who live with those in high-risk groups such as the aforementioned will also want to receive the shot in order to protect their loved ones. Keep in mind that people who should NOT get a flu shot are those allergic to eggs, those who have had a severe reaction to flu shots in the past, and people who previously developed Guillaine-Barre Syndrome in the first 6 weeks after getting a flu shot.

Guilt-Free Eggnog



½ cup egg substitute
 2 cups skim milk
 ½ cup fat-free creamer
 2 tbsp sugar substitute
 1 tsp vanilla
 ½ tsp nutmeg, cinnamon, or pumpkin spice
Alcoholic version: 2 tsp rum extract or 2 tbsp rum, brandy, or bourbon (or to taste)

Pour ingredients into a container, mixing until thickened. Cover eggnog and allow it to chill for at least 2 hours. *Serving idea:* Top each glass with a sprinkle of cinnamon or nutmeg, or add a dollop of fat-free, sugar-free whipped topping. Makes three 8-ounce servings.

Health and Wellness tips for your work, home and life – brought to you by the insurance and healthcare specialists at Corporate Health Systems, Inc.