Happy Holidays from Homewood Health!

Holiday Season Wellness Kit

It’s that time of year again... time to plan your family celebrations, arrange festivities with friends, attend your office holiday functions, complete your work-related deadlines for 2015, shop for gifts... phew.

Whether you celebrate Christmas, Chanukah, Pancha Ganapati, or Kwanzaa, the holidays are a busy time of year. Here is a holiday season wellness kit to help you stay healthy and happy this holiday season.
Stop Being so Busy

Being constantly busy helps us feel involved and relevant, which is nice up to a point. This point is, for many of us, reached quite quickly. We may not even realize we’re too busy until we can’t manage it anymore.

It’s easy to get caught up in a self-propelling whirlwind powered by the expectations of our culture. Does living in a busy frenzy prove you’re valuable and in demand?

Many people make a lot of demands on other people, and many of us make heavy demands on ourselves. It’s seen as a sign of success to always be busy. Consider how even children, especially children of active parents, go from one scheduled activity to another, leaving little to no time for breaks, either for themselves or for their parents.

You won’t stop feeling too busy until you plan for — and deliberately take — time to relax and breathe.

Frenzy is learned

Frenzy may be part of our culture, but it’s not a constituent of all cultures. Since many of us have grown up with it, frenzy has become part of us.

The good news is that since we learned our frenzy, we can also learn other ways to live.

We’ve known for centuries that it’s healthy to have quiet times for solitude. Ancient civilizations realized the benefits of meditation. Asian and European meditative practices have long histories. Now, scientists have shown meditation can counter the physiological effects of stress.
Creative things happen when people are quiet

An understanding of gravity came to Newton as he lounged under a tree. Einstein had the idea for his theory of relativity during a dream. It’s okay to pause, refocus, and unwind.

Consider examples from your own experience of good ideas you’ve had when you were alone and relaxed.

Recall the feeling of solitude and special places that enable it.

Build a mental file of your own great moments of solitude and relaxation. Many places in nature inspire us with a profound feeling of solitude.

Think of what it is like to take a stroll on a beach.

Do you remember the stillness of a forest, or the freshness of a flower garden?

Try recalling sitting in a park and watching the squirrels or birds.

And don’t forget to breathe.
Laugh
Laughter can reduce stress, boost your immune system functioning, and help discharge pent-up emotion. Share some jokes with friends, family, and co-workers. Watch a funny movie. Go check out some stand-up comedy.

Play with a pet
Studies show that playing with or petting an animal is a great way to reduce stress. So go throw that ball, tickle a belly, have a snuggle, and shake a paw together.

Learn to say ‘no’
Are you always working overtime, going to bed really late, helping everyone else with their needs, making sure everything is always perfect? Sometimes trying to meet everyone else's demands means you have no energy left for yourself. Make sure you are leaving time to take care of yourself and your needs. It may not always be easy to say ‘no’, but it’s an important skill, and people will respect you for the priorities and choices you make.

Communicate
Spending time talking and sharing with people you care about is a great way to reduce stress and feel connected and supported. So reach out, make that phone call, or reconnect at a coffee shop or restaurant, you’ll feel better for it.
1. Dress appropriately. Layered clothing is best as you can remove a layer as your body heats up. Use a fitted inner layer of clothing that pulls moisture away from the skin, a soft, warm middle layer, and finally use an outer layer that will block wind and permit evaporation of moisture.

2. Don’t forget your hat! We lose a large percentage of heat through our heads so put a lid on it!

3. Proper footwear is essential. Whether you are exercising inside or in the outdoors always choose the right footwear for the conditions. Make sure your shoes have ankle support and sufficient traction for ice and snow.

4. Make exercise part of your daily routine and have an alternative exercise in mind in case the weather forces a change of plans.

5. Set goals. Decide on what/when and how often you will exercise and strive to achieve that goal.
Celebrations and Libations

It can be fun to share a toast over the holidays, but just because it’s the festive season isn’t an excuse to overdo it. If alcohol factors into your plans, make sure you are being safe and are under control. You don’t need alcohol to celebrate, but if you enjoy a beverage, make sure you have a safe way home.

Are you concerned about your consumption?

Answer the following questions. Based on your score, you will be able to see what your level of alcohol dependence is.

Scoring is indicated in brackets after each answer. e.g. (2)

1. How often do you have a drink containing alcohol?
   - Never (0)
   - Monthly or less (1)
   - 2 to 4 times a month (2)
   - 2 to 3 times a week (3)
   - 4 or more times a week (4)

2. How many drinks containing alcohol do you have on a typical day when you are drinking?
   - 1 or 2 (0)
   - 3 or 4 (1)
   - 5 or 6 (2)
   - 7 to 9 (3)
   - 10 or more (4)

Continued on the next page.
3. How often do you have six or more drinks on one occasion?
- Never (0)
- Less than monthly (1)
- Monthly (2)
- Weekly (3)
- Daily or almost daily (4)

4. How often during the last year have you found that you were not able to stop drinking once you had started?
- Never (0)
- Less than monthly (1)
- Monthly (2)
- Weekly (3)
- Daily or almost daily (4)

5. How often during the last year have you failed to do what was normally expected of you because of drinking?
- Never (0)
- Less than monthly (1)
- Monthly (2)
- Weekly (3)
- Daily or almost daily (4)

6. How often during the last year have you needed a first drink in the morning to get yourself going after a heavy drinking session?
- Never (0)
- Less than monthly (1)
- Monthly (2)
- Weekly (3)
- Daily or almost daily (4)

7. How often during the last year have you had a feeling of guilt or remorse after drinking?
- Never (0)
- Less than monthly (1)
- Monthly (2)
- Weekly (3)
- Daily or almost daily (4)

8. How often during the last year have you been unable to remember what happened the night before because you had been drinking?
- Never (0)
- Less than monthly (1)
- Monthly (2)
- Weekly (3)
- Daily or almost daily (4)

9. Have you or someone else been injured as a result of your drinking?
- No (0)
- Yes, but not in the last year (2)
- Yes, during the last year (4)

10. Has a relative or friend, or a doctor or other health worker, been concerned about your drinking or suggested you cut down?
- No (0)
- Yes, but not in the last year (2)
- Yes, during the last year (4)

Score = [ ]

If your score is 8 or higher, your drinking might be a problem. You should cut down and consider discussing this with your doctor.
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