

Healthy Lifestyles

November 26, 2025

Treat your gut well this holiday season; You'll be thankful you did!

By Premier Medical Group

We all know how delicious the holidays are, but oftentimes the recipes, desserts and drinking habits leave us feeling less than optimal after our holiday meals. Indulging here and there can be fine, but as we know, the start of holiday season can lead to many weeks of temptation, and healthy balanced meals going out the window. This holiday season, plan ahead to keep your gut happy and healthy. A little mindfulness and planning can go a long way at keeping your body happy and your health maintained.

Why Gut Health Matters (Especially During the Holidays)

- The gut is often referred to as the body's "second brain", it has a significant impact on our overall health. It's responsible for everything from digestion and nutrient absorption, our immune system, and its connection to mood and mental health. Approximately 80% of the body's immune system resides in the gut and the gut-brain axis is a two-way communication system between the gut and the central nervous system.

In fact, 90% of serotonin (a neurotransmitter that regulates mood, sleep, and appetite) is produced in the gut. An imbalance in the gut microbiome can disrupt this communication, contributing to mood disorders like anxiety, depression, and stress. Research suggests that a healthy gut promotes the production of neurotransmitters and reduces inflammation, positively affecting mental well-being.

While holiday meals are fun and delicious, they can throw our bodies out of balance. Overeating, heavy meals, and sugary treats can disrupt gut balance. A lot of times the holidays involve overindulging, especially in foods that aren't balanced and can create inflammation in the body. Too much of the wrong food can lead to slowing down your digestion and throwing off your gut microbiome, causing bloating, gas, and indigestion. Diets high in sugar are shown to create an overgrowth of bad bacteria such as candida.

Consistently ignoring your gut health can have significant long term effects, overtime these symptoms build leading to more impactful issues.

• **Chronic Inflammation:** Ongoing inflammation can lead to problems like irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), and even



health issues like obesity and type 2 diabetes.

• **Nutrient Malabsorption:** A weakened gut might have trouble absorbing nutrients correctly, which can cause shortages in important vitamins and minerals that are needed for good health.

• **Immune System Issues:** Since most of the immune system is in the gut, long-term imbalance or inflammation can weaken the body's defenses, making it easier to get infections and illnesses.

• **Mood and Mental Health Issues:** Poor gut health can affect the production of important chemicals like serotonin, which can lead to problems like anxiety, depression, and memory or thinking issues.

Gut-Healthy Foods to Prioritize During Holidays

• **Fiber-rich vegetables:** non-starchy vegetables like spinach, Brussels sprouts, and sweet potatoes are vital in supporting digestion. Adding more to your meals can go a long way.

Examples: Roasted vegetables, leafy green salads.

• **Probiotic-rich foods:** including foods like yogurt, kefir, and fermented vegetables (sauerkraut, kimchi) in holiday meals can significantly help with

digestion and maintaining a healthy gut balance.

Tip: Incorporate these as sides or appetizers.

• **Prebiotics to nourish your gut:** Foods like garlic, onions, and oats feed healthy gut bacteria.

Examples: Use these in stuffing, soups, or dressings.

• **Lean proteins:** Opt for turkey, chicken, or plant-based protein sources that are easier on digestion.

• **Healthy fats:** Avocados, olive oil, and nuts to replace heavy creams and butter.

Tip: Make gut-friendly swaps in recipes like mashed potatoes or desserts.

Habits to Support Gut Health in Holiday Feasts

• **Portion control and mindful eating:** Try to stick to smaller portions and slower eating to support better digestion. Slowing down while eating will also give your body a chance to feel fuller sooner.

• **Stay hydrated:** Drink plenty of water. Drinking water helps digestion and prevents dehydration from alcohol or salty foods.

• **Limit sugar and alcohol:** Try to choose healthier dessert

options like fruit based desserts, dark chocolate, low sugar options or adding more protein and fiber to slow the absorption of sugar to your bloodstream and reduce its impact on your gut.

• **Stay Active:** Try to go for walks between meals to help with digestion or maintain your exercise routine through the holidays.

• **Listen to your body:** Pay attention to how you feel as you eat. If your body doesn't react well to certain foods, be mindful to avoid them.

• **Make gut friendly swaps:** Try to add as many gut friendly options into your recipes or on your plate as you can. You can still indulge in the foods you love but lean on the gut friendly options.

A healthier gut begins with mindful habits and Premier Medical Group is here to provide the expert support you need this holiday season and beyond

If you are concerned about any digestive issues you are facing such as bloating, heartburn, or changes in bowel habits, don't wait - schedule an appointment with Premier's GI Division and take charge of your gut health now. To schedule your appointment, please call 845-471-9410 or visit www.premiermedicalhv.com



Brookmeade Community honors Military Veterans

The administrators, staff and residents at the Brookmeade Community in Rhinebeck conducted their Annual Veteran's Day Celebration on Nov. 11 to honor the courage, dedication and sacrifice of all who served our country. In the photos, clockwise from the left, Members of the Red Hook VFW Post 7765 join the parade in the Brookmeade Pavilion. Board President Mike Green and CEO Karen Stritt stand with Coast Guard Veteran Arnold Johnsen and Army Reserves Veteran Philip Seymour. At right is Administrator Brian Zeidan. Karen Stritt joins U.S. Navy Veteran Bruce Bernard and his family. U.S. Air Force Veteran David Schmidt is pictured with flags and medals. *Photos courtesy of Melissa Lasher*



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Creating a joyful & peaceful Holiday Season for our children

Holiday time is here again - a time for excitement beautiful decorations and joy. They say that this is the happiest time of the year. It certainly looks and sounds like it is with all the merry, hopeful music, and, of course Santa Claus.

We may be busier than ever with gift shopping, concert rehearsals, and holiday parties. Add all of this to the normal routine of classes and academic studies, life can become a little more stressful than usual. However, for some children, this can be a particularly difficult and sad time.

Children who are surrounded by the external signs of happiness may be struggling with their own personal sadness. Their families may be in need. Their parents may be struggling as well. Be vigilant. Be responsive. Be patient and kind.

Look for the signs. If children are unable to concentrate on their assignments, we must be willing to modify their work, both in school and at home. In the classroom, create a quiet place, away from distractions to help them complete assignments. Provide a little more time, when necessary.

MAKING EDUCATION WORK with Diane Fulves

This is particularly important if the rest of the class is now involved in holiday activities. Spend a few moments with them, checking their work. Ask them how they are feeling and offer words of encouragement and praise for their effort. These few words can make a world of difference in a child's life and make them feel a little special. We all need this at times. You can see it in their eyes and in their grateful smiles. Remember that they have been on this earth only a few years and they are still learning how to cope with difficulties and sadness. Be kind to them. Share your time and understanding.

Parents, try not to overwhelm your children with holiday shopping and other activities at the end of the school day. In December they need the same amount of structure as at other times, maybe more. Make sure that they are getting sufficient sleep to help them through the school day and all the

excitement that envelops them during the next few weeks.

Try to keep a routine at home. Homework doesn't stop in December and children still need sufficient time to study for tests. If several tests are scheduled in one day, and your children need more time to prepare, let the teachers know and request that they be allowed to take one test on the following day. This is a reasonable and appropriate request and makes sense, even if your children do not have an IEP or other special accommodations. This extra day will give them time to learn and master the material. That's the point ! If something unexpected happens, which prevents homework completion one day, send a note to the teacher to let her know the situation and assure her that the work will be completed the next day.

There are many organizations and churches that ask for donations for gifts for needy families. One of my churches gathered toys, household articles and clothes for these families. This may be an added expense we incur at this time of year but knowing that a family will be remembered and have some joy at Christmas is the most heartwarming gift we can give to ourselves.

Perhaps someone in the school can make some calls to know how these families can participate in these programs. A little extra time and money is a very small way of being thankful for all we have been given. I often repeat the saying, "There but for the grace of God go I.: Amen!

Let the beautiful Christmas music seep into your spirit. All the popular songs are joyful,, but the old Christmas carols share hope for this world. Peace on earth. Good will to men. How we need this in our world today.

This very special time of year can be a joyful and peaceful time if we all work together to keep our children on the right path. When we give them time to complete all their tasks, they will be able to enjoy all the fun stuff. If there are issues, talk to them before assuming that they are not compliant. We are older and wiser. Our positive attitude and patience will contribute to our enjoyment of this wonderful season. That may be the best gift of all!

Diane Fulves is an educator and advocate for children and parents who is located in Millbrook. She is director of Empowering Our Parents, which offers information and support to parents. She is the director of Nurture the Spirit and Shakespeare Odyssey, programs that enrich children with the magic of the arts. For more information, please contact her at dee076@verizon.net.

Exercise counts! 'Holiday time' is 'moving time' BODY KNOWLEDGE

By Christian Campilii PT, DPT
Most Americans don't exercise enough despite proven benefits, such as reduced risk of cancer and chronic diseases, and improved bone health, cognitive function, weight control and overall quality of life.

Exercise is important as the new school year arrives, but it is also important for all age groups.

The second edition of the "Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans," reports that approximately 80 percent of U.S. adults and adolescents are insufficiently active. As a result, many Americans currently have or are likely to experience chronic diseases, including heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and depression.

The good news is that regular physical activity can prevent and improve many chronic conditions. America, it's time to get moving!

According to the guidelines, the following is recommended:

- **Preschool-aged children** (ages 3 through 5 years) should be physically active at least for three hours, if not more. Adult caregivers should encourage active play that includes a variety of activity types and limits sitting-around time, such as screen time.
- **Children and adolescents** (ages 6 through 17 years) need at least 60 minutes or more of activity a day. This includes activities to strengthen bones, build muscles, and get the heart beating faster.

- **Adults** should do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity a week, and at least two days for muscle-strengthening activities. Adding more time provides further benefits.

- **Older adults (ages 65 and older)** should do at least 150 minutes of aerobic activity a week and include muscle-strengthening activities 2 days a week. You should also add components, such as balance training as well. If you have limitations due to preexisting conditions, consult with a health care provider and be as physically active as your abilities allow.

- **Pregnant and postpartum women** who were physically active before pregnancy can continue these activities during pregnancy and in the postpartum period, but they should consult their health care provider about any necessary adjustments.


- **Adults with chronic health conditions and disabilities**, who are able, should do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity a week. You should consult with a healthcare provider about the types and amounts that are appropriate for you.

Physical therapists are movement experts who improve quality of life through prescribed exercise, hands-on care, and patient education.

You can contact a physical therapist directly for an evaluation. You do not need a physician referral.

*Adapted from APTA and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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Caregiver crisis – Family members must share the effort

Here are just a few statistics from “Caregiving in the U.S. report/2025.” One in four adults in the U.S. are family caregivers and by next year this will change to a higher number. Most family caregivers are UNPAID and work MUCH MORE than a full day!

These caregivers often have to give up their paying jobs to care for a loved one. They often neglect their own health in caring for a loved one. This leads to financial, emotional and physical stress for all involved. In other words, Caregiver Crisis.

The Primary caregiver needs help! Family members must share in some way to assist in the care of their loved one.

How? Can you help financially with bills that accrue, buy groceries, cook meals, buy

CAREGIVER HEALTH with Donna Slavin

medical needs, offer your time to give much needed respite to the primary caregiver?

A caregiver’s journey cannot be done alone!

As a support group facilitator, I have learned so much from the caregivers that attend. I also have witnessed the physical and emotional decline of primary caregivers. When a caregiver is born, a support network needs to be born as well. Can neighbors help? Can religious affiliations help? Could a family member pay for an aide to relieve the primary caregiver?

No one can truly understand what is involved in being the Primary Caregiver unless you become one. So how can you avoid burnout, which is a real illness?

- Ask for help and be specific for what your needs and wants are.
- Set realistic goals and to-do lists
- Embrace your feelings without judging yourself
- Find a support group that fits your needs
- Allow yourself breaks, make your breaks mean something for you physically, emotionally and

- mentally
- Be realistic. You are not a super power. You are human!
 - Know triggers that cause you stress and step away and breathe.

This is the time of year that causes the most stress in ourselves. Holidays are coming. If you are the Primary Caregiver, you are in charge. Holidays do not need to be celebrated on the day of the holiday. They can be celebrated when you are ready to celebrate them. In other words, you are not the entertainment committee too!

Simplicity is the key word for Caregivers.

I hope I have helped you and if you would like more information contact me: Donna Slavin 845-249-8186 or email dophindonna622@yahoo.com.

Creating unforgettable Holiday Memories with Candlelight



LIFE IS BETTER WITH CANDLES With Sonya, the Candle Lady

create that glow that can be seen from the outdoors.

- If you have a large entrance or front porch, make the most of it by decorating it with mini trees with clip-on candles that turn on and off on their own.
- If you have a dark corner or a pass-through space, find a table you no longer use and place those old holiday candle holders and figurines you had completely forgotten about.
- Don’t forget the guest bathroom! Place a holiday scented melt in the plug-in candle warmer and include holiday themed disposable napkins or towels for an extra touch.
- Candles are an elegant yet simple way to highlight your floral centerpieces, wine glasses and those plates that are only utilized for special occasions. If possible,

- include candle holders, drink glasses and vases with gold accents or rims, it will add a touch of richness to the simplest table arrangement.
- Keep the centerpieces low so that guests do not have to stretch to see or speak to the person across the table. It is recommended that you avoid scented candles and instead use unscented tealight candles for the seated dinner. If you want to show off your tall candles and floral arrangements, place them at buffet tables or side tables but make sure they are not near window curtains or too close to the walls.
 - **Most important** - Keep candles far away from “real” trees for these trees are extremely flammable. If you want candles near the Christmas tree, use flame-less candles instead.

heat resistant, sturdy, and large enough to contain any drips or melted wax. Always place your candles on a stable, heat-resistant surface to avoid heat damage and prevent glass containers from breaking. Never leave unattended and keep away from children and pets. Never burn a candle for more than 4 hours and trim the wick to ¼ inch before lighting to promote proper flame height. Additionally, keep candles away from drafty areas to avoid flame flickering; pool debris and black marks from forming on sides of the candle holder.

About
Sonya, the Candle Lady established herself as a trusted source for soy and beeswax candles when she opened Ye Olde Candle & Gift Shoppe in 2015 at Pleasant Valley with late husband, Dominick and relocated to Eastdale Village in 2020.
Ye Olde Candle & Gift Shoppe transitioned in May of 2024 from storefront to focus on candle-making workshops; art galleries, local libraries, restaurants and schools. However, you can now visit her new showroom suite; order on her online store and place orders through Door Dash.

The Carriage House at 42 Catharine Street, Suite C108 in Poughkeepsie.
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Empress Emergency Medical services offers special paramedic recruitment sign-on plan

Empress Emergency Medical Services, covering eight counties in the Hudson Valley, as well as the Bronx, New York City and Connecticut, has announced a special offer for paramedics who join Empress's staff by the end of this year.

Paramedics who are hired by Empress during this window will receive a \$10,000 sign-on bonus.

Those who live more than 60 miles away from the coverage area will also receive \$2,500 to help cover relocation costs.

"We are bringing New York City-level salaries to the Hudson Valley," said Empress President Michael Minerva, Sr. "Since 1985, we've been a key part of emergency medical services in this region. We genuinely care, not

only about the patients we serve, but also about the people we employ. By working together, we will expand capabilities, improve systems, and continue delivering the high-quality care residents and healthcare partners deserve. We want qualified professionals to know they have fulfilling career paths ahead of them when they become part of our team. We offer

an exceptional benefits package, and we look forward to seeing who will take us up on this opportunity.

To apply for this position, visit empressems.com/careers or fill out this online questionnaire, and someone will be in touch.

Practical gifts that inspire creativity and confidence

(StatePoint) Holiday gifting shouldn't mean giving objects that sit in the corner and gather dust. Consider these gift ideas that will inspire growth, learning, creativity and confidence — and which will actually get used:

Musical possibilities: Open the door to a world of creative possibilities for your gift recipient with the CT-S1-76 keyboard from Casio, which is designed for anyone who's ready to spread their musical wings. Its 13-watt bass-ported stereo speaker system delivers punch and clarity at all volumes, but it can also be played quietly with a good set of headphones. With 76 full-size keys with touch response and

more than 60 tones, including stereo grand piano, it's a versatile, customizable instrument, and one built to accommodate many types of use. It's sleek and portable design is well-suited for on-the-go music-making; its built-in metronome keeps the beat; and its one-button recorder makes it easy to capture one's compositions and performances.

Handwritten inspiration: Whether your gift recipient is a poet, lyricist, doodler or big thinker, a digital notebook is a must-have for getting creative juices flowing. This handy, stylish tool for the workplace, classroom, or on-the-go, combines the digital benefits of being able to save, organize

and search for one's work, with the distraction-free experience of writing on paper by hand.

Mathematical fun: Students and recreational math enthusiasts alike should be armed with the best scientific calculator to support their studies. The fx-991CW ClassWiz from Casio comes with a new quadruple graded LCD display, so that users can easily find their cursor while writing and modifying expressions. With the ability to store and recall up to nine variables, which can contain integers, computations and functions, and to recall variables between sessions, the ClassWiz is a powerful learning tool. All of its functions can be accessed

through the Math Catalog, which hosts 47 scientific constants and 40 measurement conversions. By partnering the calculator with an internet-capable mobile device, solutions can be graphed and visualized through ClassPad.net.

Fitness that keeps on giving: For the fitness enthusiast in your life, or someone who aspires to be, consider a subscription box aimed at supporting them on their athletic journey. Some subscriptions are categorized by sport to appeal to yogis, hikers, weight lifters, marathoners and more, and others are tailored by type of product, such as apparel, healthy snacks or recovery gear.

How to maximize the impact of charitable giving

(StatePoint) Charitable giving and helping communities provide many of us with a sense of purpose and joy. However, giving back looks different for everyone. No matter your charitable giving goals, thoughtful planning can help tailor your strategy to best help your chosen charity and your own finances.

"Like any financial strategy, charitable giving can offer personal monetary benefits, such as potentially lowering your taxes, but you need to be strategic and plan your gifts if you want to maximize your impact with a charity as well as for yourself," says Beth Stentz, who has served for 15 years as a financial advisor with Edward Jones, a full service financial services firm.

To help you make the most of your charitable giving, the professionals at Edward Jones are sharing some tips and advice:

Choose Wisely - Selecting a deserving organization is a personal decision and depends on what's meaningful to you. Would you prefer your donation stay in the community, or would you like it to have national or global impact? Whatever you choose, make sure the charity is trustworthy. To ensure the organization is a qualified charity, look for it on the IRS' Tax-Exempt Organization Search, the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance or the non-profit Charitynavigator.org that rates charities based on financial health, accountability and

transparency.

Check Tax Deductibility - Qualified nonprofits include religious, charitable, educational, scientific and literary charities, as well as those dedicated to helping children and animals. Political organizations and candidates are not eligible. To claim a charitable tax deduction, you must donate to qualified organizations in good standing with the IRS. Go to IRS.gov to find out if contributions to the organization you select are tax deductible. A financial advisor can work with your tax professional to determine the most tax-efficient way to give to a

cause.

Support Comes in Many Forms - If you aren't able to contribute financially, consider donating time, clothes or household items that are in good shape but no longer used. Many organizations have lists of needed things on their websites.

Keep Records - If you plan to itemize charitable deductions, the IRS requires that you substantiate them. For amounts less than \$250, records such as a canceled check, bank statement or credit card receipt can suffice. For donations of \$250 or more, you must obtain a receipt or other

written acknowledgement of the donation from the charity.

Consider Control & Flexibility - If you desire control and flexibility — or if you have unique needs — you might benefit from exploring advanced charitable giving strategies. Trusts, annuities, donor advised funds, and foundations are all things to consider with the benefit of input from professionals, such as your financial advisor and tax preparer.

To learn more about how to maximize the impact of your charitable giving, visit EdwardJones.com.

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Balance your left and right brain with tools that inspire learning

(StatePoint) Whether you're still a student or long past your school years, making learning a hobby outside the classroom can keep you sharp, particularly if you pair activities that involve logic, analysis and facts with those that involve creativity, imagination and intuition. Here are some great tools to inspire you in your educational journey and balance your left brain and right brain:

Discovering the Joy of Music: When it comes to immersing yourself in the world of music, there is no more fundamental place to start than the keyboard. The Casiotone CT-S1 is a stylish, ultra-portable keyboard suited for musicians and composers of all levels. Its incredible sound quality and 61

full-size keys with touch response make it an ideal musical partner for beginners and seasoned players alike, and its sleek, portable design, strap pins and optional battery operation make it fun to play anywhere. If you're a total beginner, connect your keyboard to the free Casio Music Space app, which acts as a digital musical score, music teacher and live performance simulator to help you gain skills fast.

Fostering a Love of Books: Assigned reading and independent reading alike are always easier and more enjoyable when you have a huge library at your fingertips. Thankfully, today's ereaders are better than ever – they're waterproof, feature color

displays ideal for absorbing everything from graphic novels to illustrated textbooks, and have extensive note-taking capabilities.

Mastering Math: Designed to enhance learning and exploration, the fx-CG100 ClassWiz Color Graph is a cutting-edge handheld calculator with an intuitive, high-contrast user interface. An optional Exam Mode makes it a smart choice for students with upcoming standardized tests. However, with its MicroPython programming capabilities and its robust catalog of mathematical functions, including basic and statistics functions, graphing capabilities and more, it's really a tool for anyone interested in continued STEAM learning.

Embracing Your Passions: Whether your interest is in the performing arts, creative writing, cooking, entrepreneurship or history, there's a course that will fascinate you on MasterClass, a subscription-based service that offers hundreds of courses taught by renowned experts. An annual subscription offers unlimited access to modules, so you can not only explore your known interests, but also tap into uncharted educational territory.

On your lifelong learning journey, you can continually embrace both analytical and creative thinking with tools that make it easy to learn, create and grow.

Burst pipes & busted lights: Avoiding holiday home repair disasters

(StatePoint) As the weather turns colder and the holidays draw near, many of us are making a home maintenance list and checking it twice.

From weatherizing pipes to tackling simple fixes, T-Rex brand, a leading manufacturer of premium repair tapes, finds that nearly 60% of Americans live in "weekend project mode" or consider their house a full-time job in fall and winter. Despite their efforts, more than half of people say they've experienced a home repair disaster right before or during the holidays and they've even had to make an urgent repair in the cold wearing pajamas "because it couldn't wait."

"We found the average American spends six to 15 hours a month this time of year on seasonal upkeep; yet, home hiccups still happen frequently when they least expect it, mainly due to extreme cold, rain and strong winds," Kerry Haugh, director of marketing for T-Rex

Tape, says. "Most people compare the stress of last-minute repairs to last-minute gift shopping, saying they both equally give them gray hairs around the holidays."

To help you stay ahead of holiday home headaches, T-Rex Tape is sharing insights on how to be prepared when maintenance or repair issues inevitably arise.

Prioritize Like a Pro - The survey shows that Americans prioritize repairs like fixing leaky faucets and pipes (57%) and minor roof leaks (55%), while often skipping or delaying less urgent projects, like repairing clogged gutters and small cracks in walls or siding. With that in mind, break repairs into "fix now" and "fix later" lists. Tackle timely problems first, such as placing temporary patches and seals on leaks to stop further damage from occurring, then schedule less critical projects for a later date so that nothing is forgotten during the holiday bustle.

Embrace Your Inner DIYer - A tough repair doesn't always require a tough bill. Seventy percent of people say they have \$300 or less set aside for surprise fall and winter fixes – so it comes as no surprise that 74% choose to DIY it when repairs are needed in colder weather, while more than half ask family and friends for help to save money. The good news is that many repairs are easy. For instance, foam weatherstrip seals and window insulation kits can be quickly and easily installed to block climate-controlled air from escaping through drafty doors or windows, while gutter guards can help prevent clogs from leaves and debris.

Build a Simple Fix Survival Kit - Homeowners say gutters, roofs, car parts, snow shovels and outdoor lighting are the first to break when the first big cold front approaches. When seasonal repairs hit, more than 80% of people rely on heavy-

duty duct tape as their secret weapon to make a quick fix. Among their must-have items to keep in the toolbox, 73% choose waterproof repair tape, like T-Rex Ferociously Strong Waterproof and Repair Tape, to go alongside recommended items like weatherproof caulk, tarps or plastic sheeting, a headlamp with spare batteries, and rock salt to prevent slips when DIY takes them outside.

For more information about T-Rex brand tape, visit www.trextape.com.

"100% of survey respondents said they've experienced an 'oh no' incident that required an immediate repair, so it's not a matter of 'if' it will happen, but 'when,'" Haugh says. "Expecting the unexpected and understanding what's most likely to break, as well as having the right fix-all tools and mindset, will keep you prepared to make reliable, fast fixes during the holiday season and beyond."



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Beta blockers and public speaking - from heart health to stage confidence

Editor’s Note: Beta blockers, originally designed to treat heart conditions, are increasingly used



Arjun Gupta, MD

off label to manage performance anxiety during public speaking. They work by blocking adrenaline’s physical effects, helping speakers feel calmer and more in control. When used occasionally and under medical guidance, they are generally considered safe for this purpose.

By Arjun Gupta, MD

Public speaking ranks among the most common fears, often triggering symptoms like a racing heart, shaky hands, dry mouth and mental fog. While practice and preparation help, some people are turning to an unexpected solution: beta blockers, a class of medications traditionally used to treat cardiovascular conditions.

Originally prescribed for high blood pressure, arrhythmias and angina, beta-blockers like

PATIENT FIRST

propranolol, atenolol and metoprolol are now gaining popularity among speakers, performers and even students seeking relief from performance anxiety.

How beta blockers work against anxiety - Beta blockers don’t affect the mind directly; they’re not sedatives or anti-anxiety medications in the traditional sense. Instead, they block the effects of adrenaline (epinephrine), the hormone responsible for the “fight or flight” response. By doing so, they:

- Slow heart rate
- Reduce tremors
- Minimize sweating
- Prevent voice shakiness

This helps speakers feel physically composed, which in turn can reduce mental anxiety. Many users report feeling more confident and focused during presentations.

Is it safe to use beta blockers for speaking? - When used occasionally and at low doses, beta blockers are generally safe for healthy individuals. However, they are prescription medications, and it’s important to consult a healthcare provider before using them, even for short-term or situational anxiety.

Potential risks include:

- Low blood pressure
- Fatigue or dizziness
- Breathing difficulties (especially for those with asthma)
- Interaction with other medications

They are not recommended for people with certain heart or lung conditions, and they should never be used as a substitute for long-term anxiety management or without medical supervision.

- Tips for using beta blockers responsibly**
- Talk to your doctor: Get a prescription and discuss your health history.
 - Use only when needed: Reserve for high-stakes events like presentations or performances.
 - Start with a low dose: Many people find relief with as little as 10-20 mg of propranolol.
 - Avoid combining with alcohol or other sedatives
 - Practice with it first: Try it in a low-pressure setting to see how your body responds.

The bottom line

Beta blockers aren’t a cure for anxiety, but they can be a helpful tool for managing the physical symptoms that sabotage public speaking. When used thoughtfully and under medical guidance, they offer a bridge to confidence, helping speakers focus on their message instead of their nerves.

Dr. Arjun Gupta is a cardiologist with Vassar Brothers Medical Center, part of Northwell Health.

Doctors’ tips to stay healthy & safe this holiday season

(StatePoint) The holiday season is a joyous time to reconnect with family and friends, but it can also throw your wellness routines out of alignment. Doctors advise prioritizing healthy choices now so you can start 2026 feeling your best.

“Amid the hustle and bustle of the holidays, it’s easy to lose sight of our well-being, overindulge in food and drink, and feel stressed. A little awareness and a few healthy habits can go a long way in helping you and loved ones enjoy the season in good health,” says Dr. Bobby Mukkamala, president of the American Medical Association (AMA).

For a healthy and happy holiday season, the AMA recommends the following tips:

1. Watch what you eat. Pay attention to labels and avoid ultra-processed foods, especially those high in added sodium, saturated fats and sugar. Consider having a healthy snack before the big meal or offer to bring a healthier dish for the holiday spread. Drink water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages, and eat nutritious,

whole foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables alongside richer holiday dishes.

2. Prioritize your mental health. Factors such as holiday spending and navigating time with extended family can bring on extra seasonal stress. Get sufficient sleep and exercise, and don’t hesitate to talk to a mental health professional when you need help managing stress.

3. Prioritize physical activity during this busy time of year. A good rule of thumb for adults is at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity each week. Brisk walks, bike rides, hikes and family-friendly sports like basketball and touch football can provide easy, fun ways to get off the couch and elevate your heart rate. If you’re traveling, don’t forget to pack your sneakers!

4. Be prepared when traveling. Whether you’re flying or taking a road trip, you might be tempted to grab convenient yet unhealthy food for the journey. Consider packing your own snacks, such as fresh fruits and vegetables or

small portions of dried fruits and nuts. When flying, pack your medication in your carry-on bag instead of your checked luggage so it’s easily accessible. Keeping medication handy will help you avoid missing a dose on busy travel days, especially amid flight delays. Stay hydrated and drink plenty of water during your flight as air travel can cause dehydration. And keep your body moving in-flight to avoid blood clots.

5. Make smart choices and plan ahead if you’re driving. In December 2023 alone, 1,038 people died in alcohol impaired-driving crashes in the United States. If you plan to drink, always arrange for a sober driver or alternative transportation. And if you are the designated driver, commit to 100% sobriety. Also make sure to get plenty of sleep before your road trip as drowsy driving is responsible for an estimated 100,000 car crashes each year nationwide.

6. Vaccination remains the best protection against several serious respiratory viruses circulating this fall and winter, particularly as

people are spending more time indoors and gathering for the holidays. The AMA encourages you to speak with your physician or other health care professional to determine which vaccines are best for you. The AMA offers infographics to help patients and physicians cut through vaccine confusion and foster open, honest conversations with each other. The infographics can be found at <https://ama-assn.org>.

7. Start New Year’s resolutions early. Speak with your doctor or other health care professional about quitting tobacco, nicotine and e-cigarettes, and declare your home and car smoke-free to protect loved ones from secondhand smoke exposure.

“While you’re celebrating this holiday season and reconnecting with family and friends, remember to take care of your health. Eating well, staying active, and taking precautions to prevent the spread of respiratory viruses can help you enjoy the season and start the new year strong,” says Dr. Mukkamala.



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