



# HEALTHY LIVING

## Tips for a Healthy Holiday Season

The day after Thanksgiving is a milestone of sorts in America. It reminds us of just how quickly the year has gone by and how close we are to the holiday season. This realization—coupled with the fabulous sales at major department stores and malls everywhere—helps make the day after Thanksgiving our biggest shopping day of the year. And until we flip the calendar over to a new year, the chaos just doesn't let up.

“Our bodies have the capacity to do a little more than we normally do,” says Dr. Scott Bautch, a member of the American Chiropractic Association’s (ACA) Council on Occupational Health. “But our bodies do not adapt very well to doing a lot more than we normally do. Since the added demands of this season can stress the capacity of our bodies, we need to do everything we can to help ourselves. Eat right, drink plenty of water, stretch, exercise and take a few minutes to slow down and reflect on what the season is all about.”

Relax and enjoy the holidays! Dr. Bautch and ACA encourage you to consider the following tips to help keep you and your loved ones healthy, happy and safe this season.

### Treat Holiday Shopping as an Athletic Event

- Wear shoes with plenty of cushioning in the soles to absorb the impact of walking on those hard shopping mall floors.
- Make sure the clothing you wear is as comfortable as possible. It's a good idea to wear layers, because you may be going from a cold environment (outdoors) to a warm environment (indoors).
- Leave your purse at home. Keep your belongings in a zippered-up coat pocket or in a light backpack, packing only items that are absolutely essential (driver's license, credit card, etc.).
- Ask for help if you're purchasing an item that's heavy, oddly-shaped, or hard to reach. Be patient and don't try to do it yourself.



“During the holiday season, we're running at absolute maximum capacity, which can lead to stress and even depression,” says Dr. Bautch. “Why do so many people become depressed around the holidays? Staying active, stretching and staying hydrated can help increase our capacity, to help us deal with the activities of the season.”



### Plan Frequent Breaks

During a day of heavy shopping, most people should take a break every 45 minutes. Those who lead a sedentary lifestyle may need to take a break every 20-30 minutes, while those who are physically active may get away with taking less frequent breaks.

- If your mall or shopping center doesn't offer lockers, try to plan trips to your car where you can drop off excess bags and continue shopping without the extra weight. Don't carry around more than is absolutely necessary at one time.
- When taking breaks, try to eat light foods and stay hydrated. A salad and some fruit is a much better option than a burger and fries.

"We actually need to eat better than normal during the holiday season," explains Dr. Bautch. "Heart attacks occur more often during the holidays. Eating a heavy meal and then running out on an exhausting shopping trip can be very dangerous."

### Shopping with Children

If at all possible, do not bring children along on a holiday shopping trip. Most children simply do not have the stamina for such an event, and you and your child will only become frustrated with one another. Don't add this type of stress to an already stressful situation. Instead, try to split up "child duty" with a spouse or another parent. They can watch your kids while you shop, and vice-versa.

"Shopping with children is just a bad idea," says Dr. Bautch. "If your hands are loaded with shopping bags, you may not be able to hold your child's hand, which could increase the chances he or she might wander away from you. Take whatever steps necessary to avoid bringing your child along."



### Wrapping Gifts

Since there is no "ideal" position for wrapping gifts, the most important thing to remember is to vary your positions. For example, try standing at a table or countertop for one package, sitting on a bed for another, sitting in a comfortable chair for another, and so on.

Do not wrap packages while sitting on the floor. Wrapping packages while sitting on a hard floor can wreak havoc on your posture, and should be avoided.

And always remember to stretch before and after you wrap gifts. "When wrapping presents, it's a good idea to 'stretch the opposites,'" recommends Dr. Bautch. "In other words, if you are leaning forward when wrapping your gifts, stretch backward when you are done."



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