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*Merry Christmas &  
Happy New Year!*



*We wish you peace and  
happiness during this special  
time of year!*

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### **Healthy Holiday Tips**

It goes without saying that keeping yourself and your family healthy throughout the holiday season can be a challenge. When you combine chillier temps, housebound days, year-end deadlines and pre-holiday preparations - not to mention kids passing around colds at school - you can end up spending the holidays under the covers.

No matter how many inherent seasonal risk factors you face, there are ways to prepare for and get through the season virtually unscathed. Here are a few tips to help you stay well and enjoy your holiday season!

- **Flu shots** -- Flu shots seem to be available at practically every drug store or pharmacy. Discuss with your doctor the pros and cons of flu shots for yourself and your family.
- **Gets some zzz's** -- The holiday hustle and bustle can interfere with normal sleep patterns, yet sleep is essential to health and healing. Prioritize getting enough sleep - or taking a quick nap - despite your busy schedule.
- **Fill the fridge** -- It is easy to allow your pantry to start looking like a sweet shop as the holidays near. Take care to stock your refrigerator and cabinets with health snacks and ingredients for balanced meals. Think fruit, nuts, lower-calorie snacks, veggies, and lean proteins.
- **Get real** -- Emotional health is important, too, so be realistic about what can be expected through the season.
- **Keep moving** -- Despite many holiday temptations to just relax, don't give in to being a couch potato. Get to the gym or yoga studio, go for a walk, jump on the treadmill or dance. The important thing is to just move!



### **The Live vs. Artificial Debate**

The kind of tree that adorns a person's home during the holidays can provoke debate as much as Coke vs. Dr. Pepper or Chevy vs. Ford! When it comes to Christmas trees, do you choose live or artificial? Both trees have advantages and disadvantages. Below is some information to help you make the best decision for you and your family.

#### **Artificial Trees**

According to the North Carolina Consumers Council, artificial trees pose fewer safety concerns than live trees, but that is not to say they don't have risks of their own. Even fake trees can catch fire when sockets are overloaded with Christmas lights, and it only takes seconds for any tree to become completely engulfed in flames. And yes, flame-resistant artificial trees will eventually succumb to a fire. When using a pre-lit tree, always follow instructions, and place the tree in an open area where a fire won't quickly spread to furniture or other things in close proximity.

The benefits of artificial trees, of course, are well-known. They are convenient and often less messy than real trees. You can re-use them year after year, saving money and saving the environment. And there's no need to spend time searching for the perfect tree, since it is usually easy to adjust the "branches" to your liking.

#### **Live Trees**

Ok....so you want the real deal. That's great! But you are going to have to take a little more care than you would with an artificial tree. First of all, pick a tree that is in good shape. If needles come off easily when you give it a shake or a quick pull on a branch, find another one.

When you get it home, cut off the bottom two inches of the trunk, and fill the tree stand with water. This is the best way to prevent a fire. Remember not to overload it with lights and decorations. The longer you keep your tree up, the drier -- and the more dangerous - it will become.

Dispose of your tree properly as well. Don't burn it or put it in your fireplace, as a burning Christmas tree can be harder to control than other types of fires.

*No matter what tree you choose, the important thing is to keep safety in mind as well. If you do that, your holiday enjoyment will be real, even if your tree isn't!*

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