

# Your Health

 Health Partners

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NEWSLETTER

## Holiday Health & Wellbeing



**T**he Christmas season, for those who celebrate it, can be a time of cheer, family gatherings and good food.

But for some – even for those who do not celebrate – it can be a time of financial crisis, tension, loneliness or depression.

The discrepancy between what ‘should be’ and what ‘is’ can create additional pressures and can lead to us feeling caught in a vicious cycle.

In order to prevent this from happening, let’s look at some of the ways we can reduce those pressures.

## BE KIND TO YOURSELF

It’s OK think about yourself and your needs first, even if others don’t seem to understand.

That may mean prioritising how to get what you need – this could be material considerations, such as what to eat or where to sleep or it could mean emotional support.

Consider talking to someone you trust about what you need in order to cope.

You don’t need to compare your situation with others. Be aware that social media can focus on people having fun, surrounded by others – when the reality may be different. In other words, you are not alone.

You may have lost someone close to you and still be grieving. Understand this and treat yourself with care. Try not to expect too much of yourself. Imagine how unimportant the stress of Christmas preparations will seem in a couple of months’ time – or even in a couple of weeks.

It might help to make a list of the things that you need to do to prepare for Christmas and prioritise one item at a time, rather than feeling overwhelmed.



## MAKE SOME PLANS

Think about what might be difficult about Christmas for you and if there’s anything that might help you cope.

For example:

- If you’re going to be somewhere unfamiliar (or going back to a place that brings up difficult emotions) for Christmas, consider what you can bring to feel more comfortable, or find somewhere you can go to take a break (even if that’s a little walk outside);
- If you are abstaining from or don’t drink alcohol and there will be alcohol where you are going, can you politely decline or spend less time in these places?





## BREATHE


Before sleep, or whenever you feel stress or anxiety building, concentrate for a minute or longer on taking slow, steady, deep breaths, emptying your lungs as much as possible in between each breath. Breathe in for four counts and out for six – in through your nose and out through your mouth.



Or could you choose something that is more conducive to your goals?

- If you do attend, try not to overindulge – it's OK to say, "Thank you, no," to a drink or food if you don't want it;
- If you take any medication, make sure you have enough for the holiday period, which may mean ordering or buying some in advance – or finding out where your closest pharmacy is and when they will be open;
- If you're worried about feeling lonely or isolated this holiday, think about activities to pass the time – take a long walk in nature, watch a film, read a book, call a friend or do some volunteering;
- Plan something nice to do after Christmas;

having something to look forward to could make a real difference;

- If you are spending the holidays with family, there might be the expectation that the festive season is a 'time for family', which can add pressure on relationships. Instead, be realistic about what you can expect from this time – it may help to avoid disappointment and arguments. But if it all becomes a bit much, head outside for a walk;
- Set a 'start' and 'finish' time for what you count as Christmas. Remember that it won't last forever, and you may find that adding in one or two adjustments can make all the difference. 



## LOW-CARB GINGERBREAD COOKIES

From [www.lowcarbspark.com](http://www.lowcarbspark.com)  
– note this recipe contains nuts (almond flour)

### Ingredients

- 2 cups almond flour (or ground almonds)
- 2 tablespoons coconut flour
- ½ cup powdered sweetener (stevia, erythritol or similar)
- 1 egg (large)
- 2 tablespoons ricotta or mascarpone cheese (or soft cheese)
- ¼ cup butter or coconut oil, melted
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- 1¼ teaspoons ground ginger
- 1½ teaspoons cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 pinch salt



### Method

1. Slowly mix the almond and coconut flours with the egg, coconut oil (or butter), vanilla extract and the spices until it has the consistency of a dough. Don't be afraid to use your hands.
2. Let the dough rest in the fridge for at least 2 hours. This step will make it easier to work with.
3. Roll out the dough and use cookie cutters to make individual cookies – the thinner your dough, the crispier the cookie.
4. Put the uncooked gingerbread men on a greased tray 1 inch apart and bake in a pre-heated oven for 8-10 minutes, until they're golden brown on the edges.

Note: If the cookie dough is too dry to work with, add a teaspoon of milk or water until it is easier to roll out without being sticky.





## GINGER-CITRUS SPICED COCKTAIL

from [www.healthysxykitchen.com](http://www.healthysxykitchen.com)

### Ingredients

- 3 cups water
- 2 cups orange juice, fresh squeezed about 8 oranges
- 8-10 strips orange peel from 2 oranges
- 10 ounces ginger, peeled and sliced (about 10 1-inch pieces)
- 1/2 tablespoon cloves, whole
- 1 tablespoon black peppercorns
- 1 tablespoon fennel seeds, optional
- 1 tablespoon coriander seeds, optional
- 1-2 star anise, optional
- 2 limes juiced – peel some strips of rind for garnish if desired
- 2-3 tablespoons honey (local, if possible)

### Method

1. Put all ingredients into a saucepan (except for lime juice and honey) and bring to a boil.
2. Turn heat down and simmer gently for 45 minutes. Set aside to cool slightly.
3. Strain out the solids. If using right away, add the juice of 2 limes and 2-3 tablespoons of honey, depending on how sweet you want it. Mix well. If making ahead, wait until you are ready to use it to add the lime juice and honey.
4. Pour into a glass jar or small pitcher and chill. When serving, pour over ice and top with seltzer or mineral/sparkling water in about a 1:3 ratio (1 part mix to 3 parts water). Stir.
5. Garnish with orange peel and edible flowers or a mint sprig.

Note: Mix can be kept in refrigerator for up to 5 days.




## WHOLE HEALTH THIS HOLIDAY

While it's OK to sometimes overindulge – as many do during the holidays – try to stick to a healthy diet and take regular exercise (which is good for your mind, body and soul).

Some people find that eating a healthy, filling breakfast on Christmas Day, such as wholegrain oat porridge and natural yogurt with fruit, means they are less likely to overindulge during the main meal. If you can resist the 'extras', like gravy and stuffing, or swap out certain treats for healthier alternatives (see our two ideas on the previous page, or go online to search for 'healthy Christmas swaps'), so much the better.

To build up your heart rate and keep your lungs and heart healthy, regular exercise is key. Try to balance rest and relaxation with physical activity. As good as a full week of film and television might seem, your body and brain won't thank you afterwards!

Walks can be taken with the whole family between meals – or alone if you are needing some peace and quiet and a chance for reflection.

It is not unusual for alcohol consumption to increase over the festive period. If you drink alcohol, be mindful of the harm that excess consumption can cause and make sure you drink plenty of water (herbal tea is a great option in the evening: just don't add sugar or honey). 



### THE UK GOVERNMENT'S GUIDELINES

- To keep health risks from alcohol at a low level, it is safest to drink no more than 14 units a week on a regular basis;
- If you wish to cut down the amount you drink, a good way to help achieve this is to have several drink-free days a week.







Taking care of yourself over the holidays is important, and it's okay to ask for help or reach out if you feel overwhelmed or lonely.

We wish you all a very happy festive season and a peaceful holiday. See you next year...

If you're struggling this winter, you may want to find support for your mental or physical health. Here are some helpful outlets:

■ **Mental health:**

Samaritans: 116 123 (freephone)

Mind's Infoline: 0300 123 3393

■ **Money and legal advice:**

Citizen's Advice: [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

■ **Medical advice**

*Find a pharmacy near you*

**England:** [www.nhs.uk/service-search](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search)

**Scotland:** [www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/nhs-services/pharmacy/nhs-pharmacy-first-scotland](http://www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/nhs-services/pharmacy/nhs-pharmacy-first-scotland)

**Wales:** [www.111.wales.nhs.uk/LocalServices/?s=Pharmacy](http://www.111.wales.nhs.uk/LocalServices/?s=Pharmacy)

**NI:** [www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/2286.htm](http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/2286.htm)

■ **NHS 111**

**England and NI:** [www.111.nhs.uk/](http://www.111.nhs.uk/)

**Scotland:** [www.nhs24.scot/Our-Services/when-to-phone-111](http://www.nhs24.scot/Our-Services/when-to-phone-111)

**Wales:** [www.111.wales.nhs.uk/](http://www.111.wales.nhs.uk/)

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**Our commitment is total.** We invest in our services, creating new ones and keeping in step with every client. We constantly explore new ways of working and make no compromises in the quality of our services.

Simply put, we are here to help people be their best.