

## A Toast to Moderation

Excessive drinking results in 88,000 fatalities each year and is the 3rd leading cause of preventable death, says the CDC (Centers for Disease Control). These and many other sobering statistics should be enough to re-think abusing alcohol in general, but they give particular pause around holiday time, when open-house events are in full swing. It's as easy for celebrating hosts and guests to lose track of what they've had to drink, as it is just one more pig-in-the-blanket.

### Alcohol limits mean different things for men and women:

Drinking <b>Moderately</b>	Drinking <b>Excessively</b>	Drinking <b>Heavily</b>
Men: Up to 2 drinks per day	"Binge" Drinking/Men: 5 or more drinks in 2 hours	"Heavy" Drinking/Men: 15 or more drinks per week
Women: Up to 1 drink per day	"Binge" Drinking/Women: 4 or more drinks in 2 hours	"Heavy Drinking"/Women: 8 or more drinks per week

Alcohol abuse has a serious impact on both physical and mental health, including cancer and non-reversible cirrhosis (late scarring) of the liver, heart disease, high blood pressure, depression and even death. If you already have a chronic health condition and are on medication, be sure to ask your doctor if even moderate drinking is safe for you. Drinking alcohol is a "no-no" during pregnancy (or while trying to conceive) and its use has been linked to miscarriage, stillbirth, plus a number of mental, physical and behavioral disabilities in infants (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders or FASDs).

Remember to keep these tips in mind when it comes to alcohol:

- Drink **moderately** or opt for a creative, non-alcoholic "mocktail" (alcohol-free cocktail).

- **Never** drink and drive; have a designated driver.
- Avoid alcohol if pregnant or trying to get pregnant.
- Nix alcohol if you're on medication or if it could make a current health condition worse. (Ask your doctor.)
- If you're under 21, you're under the legal age to drink – so don't.
- As a host, be mindful of what and how much you serve. If you're a guest, know your limits so you'll be invited back.
- If you're "buzzed," you're drunk. Risky behaviors can include drunk driving, unprotected sex, or violence, with life-changing impact.

Here's to moderation and good health. Cheers!

Visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) for more information and resources.

**Choice \chois\ (n):** the chance to choose freely after giving careful thought to the options at hand.

Choice is a powerful thing. Each choice we make affects our lives for better or worse. For those of us with chronic health issues, we face a choice to do something to gain better control over our illness or do nothing and risk letting our illness control us.

**TransFormations** is for those who want to start or do more to treat a chronic health issue. But it is much more than your everyday newsletter. It's a tool for setting and tracking your health goals. It's a guide for taking simple steps forward. It's a forum to hear from others whose stories are much like your own. It's a way to give you more options from which you can learn, grow and succeed.

**Questions?** Call us toll-free at 1-866-439-2041. Our Health Coaches are happy to talk with you about your health and healthcare options.

# Allergy and Asthma Tips for the Holidays

You may be wondering how you can avoid asthma symptoms or food allergies during the holidays. The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology suggests the following tips to help keep the holiday season reaction-free:

## Avoid Allergic & Asthma Triggers

- Before decorating a live tree, dry it out in an enclosed porch or garage. When buying a tree, find out if the retailer has a shaking machine. This will physically remove some allergens from the tree.
- Clean an artificial tree outside before you decorate it. The tree can gather mold and dust in storage.
- Wash fabric decorations in hot, soapy water before hanging or placing them.
- Use plastic, metal or glass decorations that cannot trap dust mites.
- When spraying artificial snow on windows or other surfaces, be sure to follow directions. These sprays can bother your lungs if you inhale them.
- If visiting homes with pets, take medication before arriving to avoid a possible reaction.
- The holidays can be a very stressful time of year. Be aware of your stress level, which can sometimes trigger an asthma attack.
- Ask your relatives and friends to avoid burning wood in the fireplace. The smoke can prompt an asthma attack or allergic reaction.



- Dust mites can be a problem when traveling away from home. Bring your own pillow with an allergen-proof cover. If staying in a hotel, request down-free pillows.

## Food Allergies

- When going to holiday parties, let the host know about your food allergies. Also, ask about the ingredients used to make the meal.
- Carry self-injectable epinephrine in case you accidentally eat a food to which you are allergic. Homemade items do not have ingredient lists for you to check. These foods can be contaminated with trace amounts of allergens through contact with storage containers, baking sheets and utensils.
- Remind family members and friends that strict avoidance is the only way to control food allergies. Even one small bite can be harmful.

Source: American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (<http://www.aaaai.org>).

# Think Green This Holiday Season

Sure, we all tend to overdo it during the holidays. But, when it comes to trash, the numbers are scary! Between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day, we create about 25% more trash than usual—that's equal to 25 million tons of trash. Think green this holiday season. Make a plan to reduce, reuse and recycle.

## Waste-free gift giving

When it comes to gift-giving, they say it's the thought that counts. Turn your thoughts toward waste-free choices.

- Make your own gifts. Everyone loves baked goods!
- Give the gift of your time. Offer some free babysitting or a home-cooked meal.
- Pamper someone. Give a manicure or massage.

- For the person who has everything, make a donation in his or her name to a charity.
- Think outside the box, literally. Get creative and choose something fun like cooking or photography lessons, or tickets to an event. No wrapping necessary!

Get creative with wrapping. Use what you have on hand like newspaper, brown bags, fabric scraps, or recycled wrapping paper from last year.

## Deck the halls

- Did you know that 30 million used Christmas trees wind up in landfills? Choose an artificial or potted tree instead.

# A New Year – A New You?

The start of a new year can be a time of new beginnings. Resolutions are often made but, unfortunately, seldom kept. Rather than making resolutions, it might be a good time to take stock of your health and see what you can do to improve it. How about a “New Year To-do List” of simple things you can really accomplish? Here are some suggestions of what you can do to get a bit more organized and keep up on improving your health:

## 1 Start a folder file entitled “My Health Numbers.”

Keep a copy of not just your primary care physician (PCP) and other health care professionals’ phone numbers, but your most recent screening results (blood glucose, cholesterol, height, weight). These are important numbers to know. You may have a copy of this information from your employer’s biometric screening or from a doctor’s visit.

## 2 Now is a good time to schedule a physical exam with your PCP. Review your screening results and ask your doctor what your numbers should be. If your numbers are not in the normal range, ask what you can do to help improve them.

## 3 Make sure your PCP is aware of any specialists you have seen over the last year and any treatments you have had. Also tell your PCP about all the prescribed and over-the-counter drugs you are taking (including often-overlooked vitamin or herbal supplements), as they may have a significant impact.

## 4 Ask your pharmacist to review the medications you are taking to make sure there are no new side effects or dangerous drug interaction among them. The pharmacist can contact your PCP and suggest



safer alternatives if needed. Be sure to ask for suggestions on lower-priced generic drugs that may work, as well as the brand names you may have been prescribed.

## 5 Check the expiration date on the items in your medicine cabinet. Look at the dates on both prescribed and over-the-counter drugs. Remove those that are expired. To dispose of drugs safely, check the FDA website at: <http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm101653.htm>.

Finally, there are two documents you should have that concern your health care: a **living will** and a **durable power of attorney**. A living will states the type of care you want (or don’t want) in the event that you are unable to make medical decisions. A durable power of attorney is a document that appoints someone you trust to make health decisions for you if you are unable to do so. To find out more about these items, talk to your doctor or lawyer.

If you do choose a live tree, check [www.earth911.com](http://www.earth911.com) for a place to recycle it after the holidays.

- Recycle broken holiday lights by sending them to Christmas Light Source Recycling Program, 4313 Elmwood Drive, Benbrook, TX 76116, or check for local resources.

### Green your greetings

2.65 billion holiday cards are sold each year. That’s enough to fill a football field 10 stories high.\* What can you do?

- Shorten your mailing list
- Use cards made from recycled paper
- Send some e-greetings

And, don’t forget to recycle the cards sent to you.

\*Source: California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery.

## Want more?

Find more helpful tips, news and facts at your company’s wellness website or your [mynurturlife](http://mynurturlife.com) website. Need help? Call Transformations at **1-866-439-2041**.

# Snooze Your Way to Better Health

Studies show that adult obesity has doubled over the past 30 years. They also reveal the average amount of sleep we get has decreased over the past few decades by 2 hours. Is this a coincidence in the Age of Multi-taskers? Probably not.

When we don't get enough sleep, we often feel worn-out and cranky. But not getting the right amount of sleep can be more serious than that, causing everything from falling asleep at the wheel, to being a factor in chronic diseases, like diabetes, depression, heart disease, and obesity.

You might be wondering how a lack of sleep can cause obesity. People who don't get enough sleep may not have the energy to exercise. They may choose to sit and watch television instead. Also, since they are awake more hours, they may be eating more.

Researchers studying the sleep/obesity connection have found that our levels of the hormone 'leptin,' decrease if we are not getting enough sleep. Leptin tells our body when we need food. When levels are low, our brain gets the message that we need to eat. Often times, sleep-deprived people are eating too much and making bad food choices.

**So, how much sleep do we generally need to stay healthy? The National Sleep Foundation suggests the following:**

- Children 5-12 years need 9-11 hours
- Adolescents need at least 8.5-9.5 hours
- Adults should aim for 7-9 hours

**There are steps you can take to help you get a good night's sleep:**

- Find some type of ritual before



bed to help you wind down (deep breathing, reading, etc.).

- Avoid eating heavy foods before bed. Stick to a light snack or a glass of low-fat milk (better yet, make it skim).
- Create the perfect sleep conditions for you (cool room, quiet or soothing music from a sound machine).
- Exercise is great, but make sure it's at least 3 hours before bedtime.
- Avoid caffeine at least 4 hours before you go to sleep.

*Sweet dreams!*

## Breathe Easier This Season

Cold and flu season is soon upon us, so it's especially important to review the checklist for protecting your lungs against infection, viruses, and dangerous behaviors that can severely impact your health. If you're currently healthy, stay that way, by continuing to eat well, exercise, maintain a healthy body weight, and (big one) *not* smoking. If you're currently challenged by a condition like asthma or COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease), you need to be extra-careful about potential "triggers" that can make existing symptoms worse.

Be good to your lungs this season (and always) by following these tips:

- Get a flu and/or pneumonia shot (be sure to check with your doctor as to what he/she recommends for *you*).
- If you smoke, *quit*, and avoid second-hand smoke.
- Bypass crowds when you can.
- Practice good hygiene by washing your hands often.

- Carry hand-sanitizer with you when on-the-go.
- Visit the dentist every 6 months for professional cleanings and exams (bacteria from the mouth can travel to other areas of the body).

Visit [www.lung.org](http://www.lung.org) for more tips and resources.



**Share your story.** No one has to face a health condition alone. Sometimes it helps to know that there are others who are going through the same ups and downs as you. Call 1-866-439-2041 and share your story in your own words so we can share it with people like you.

# ActionPlan

An “action plan” is a tool to help you accomplish something **you want to do**. Most of us know the things we should do to manage our health. At best, we don’t do them as often as we should. At worst, we don’t do them at all. Your action plan should call for a

specific action or set of actions that you know you can do. It should also set a daily time in which to do the activity. Finally, your plan should span just a short time period—say, one week.

The key is to make sure your goal is realistic and is a step toward a longer-term goal you want to achieve.

Take out a pencil and fill in the spaces below to start your action plan. You are free to make copies of this page to create plans for other weeks. If you are not sure where to start, call **TransFormations** at 1-866-439-2041 and you and a Health Coach can come up with some ideas together.

This week I will...			
What are you going to do?	How much will you do?	When are you going to do it?	How many days are you going to do it?
<b>Example:</b> Make a folder for 'My Health Numbers.'	Add doctors' phone numbers and my screening results.	in the morning	1 day this week
<b>Your turn:</b>			

**1** Rate your chance of success. On a scale of 0 to 10, how confident are you that you will reach your goal? (“0” means you are **“not at all confident”**; “10” means you are **“totally confident”**).

Write your answer here: \_\_\_

If your answer is 6 or less, reduce your goal—you may be trying to accomplish too much at one time.

**2**

**3** Keep track of your progress. Use the chart below to mark each day that you did what you said you would. Use the “Comments” field to write down the things that helped or got in the way that day.



	Check off	Comments
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

Check your results. At the end of each week, take a look at how you have done. Take stock of your results and think about what your next action plan should be.

Tell us how you did. Our Health Coaches want to know how you are doing and if there is anything we can do to help.



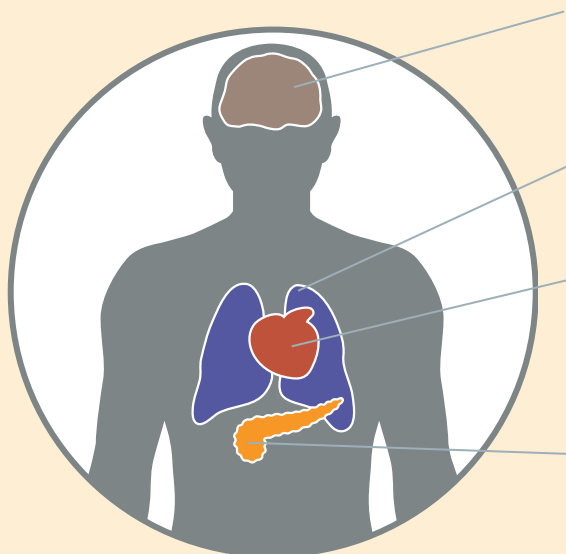
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**Questions?** Call us toll-free at 1-866-439-2041. Our Health Coaches are happy to talk with you about your health and healthcare options. Our coaches include registered dietitians, registered nurses, diabetes educators, exercise physiologists, respiratory therapists and other healthcare specialists. They have made it their life's work to help folks like you. Talk with one today.

# Chronic Health Conditions

Almost half of all Americans have at least one chronic health issue. For those of us who live with these conditions, **TransFormations** is a guide to take control of our illnesses and reclaim our lives.



**Depression** – this condition causes one to feel hopeless, tired and/or worthless. It is also marked by sharp changes to one's eating habits and sleeping patterns.

**Chronic lung disease** – these conditions block airflow in and out of the lungs, such as asthma and COPD.

**Heart disease** – these conditions can disrupt the flow of blood to your heart (coronary artery disease) or weaken your heart and its ability to pump blood through your body (heart failure).

**Diabetes** – this condition affects your body's ability to make or use insulin. Insulin is created by your pancreas and is used to help your body use blood sugar for energy.

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