



December brings the holidays - a time of gathering together with loved ones and enjoying the best of the season: food, friends, family and fun.

This issue of Health Matters Online has some great tips to help you and your family have a happy and safe holiday season. We have an article on food safety - specifically, tips for a tasty and safe turkey. We feature articles on how to ensure little ones are protected from any potentially dangerous toys and decorations. Finally, the weeks surrounding the holidays can mean a lot of indulging. Our dietitians have advice for curbing unhealthy treats and incorporating healthy snacks into holiday celebrations.

Happy holidays!

## DECEMBER 2017

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## TIME TO TALK TURKEY

As we spread the joy of the season we need to be careful to not spread food-borne illnesses. These simple food safety tips will help you prepare a [safe and tasty holiday meal](#).

**Store and thaw safely:** Keep fresh turkey refrigerated no longer than three days before cooking. Thawing poultry at room temperature is not recommended because it allows harmful bacteria to grow. To safely thaw frozen turkey in its wrapper place it in a clean sink full of cold water, changing the water every couple of hours, or thaw it in the fridge (allow five hours per pound). Keep other foods, especially those with meat, seafood, dairy, eggs or other moist, protein-rich foods chilled until served.

**Clean carefully:** Wash your hands, utensils and work surfaces well before prep work begins. Once the preparation is done, clean surfaces in hot soapy water, rinse, then sanitize. Sanitizing can be done with a diluted bleach solution (30 ml of bleach per gallon of water) that is allowed to sit for two minutes. Wash your hands well after cleaning the cutting board and before and after working with any new menu items. Don't prepare foods for others when you have been sick. If you have experienced symptoms of vomiting or diarrhea, wait at least 48 hours after symptoms have ended before preparing food for others.



**Avoid cross contamination:** Store raw meat away from food that is ready-to-eat, including fruit and vegetables (and be sure to wash these thoroughly before serving). Turkeys should be wrapped well and stored on the lowest shelf of your fridge or in the meat keeper to keep blood and juices from contaminating other food. Ensure only clean utensils and cutting boards are used. Use a separate cutting board to prepare raw meat. Wash hands after handling any raw foods and minimize hand contact during final preparation steps.

**Cook well:** For turkey, set the oven no lower than 350°F (177°C) and cook for about 20 minutes per pound. While 20 min per pound is a guide, there are a number of factors that will determine actual cooking time needed. It is always best to use a good meat thermometer to measure the turkey's internal temperature and ensure it's safe to eat. All parts of the bird including stuffing should be at least 165°F (74°C) when removed from the oven. Health Canada recommends an internal temperature of 180°F (82°C) at the thickest part of the meat as additional assurance. Check the temperature in several places to be sure. Cooked food should be kept at 140°F (60°C) while waiting to serve.

**Refrigerate:** Chill food immediately after returning from the store and soon after dinner is complete. Refrigerate at 40°F (4°C) or in a freezer at 0°F (-18°C). Refrigerate or freeze all poultry leftovers within two hours. Health Canada recommends refrigerating leftovers for no more than two to three days. Put them in the freezer in order to keep them longer.

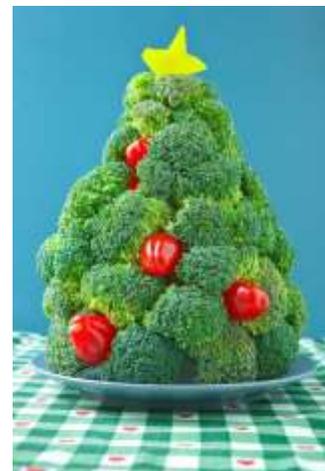
For more information about how to safely prepare poultry and other holiday favorites visit [Health Canada](https://www.healthcanada.ca).

## HOLIDAY EATING: HEALTHY SNACKS FOR PARENTS

The holidays are a wonderful time that brings together family and friends to celebrate. However, it can also be a challenging time for our healthy lifestyle goals. Food is often at the centre of our celebrations and gatherings make treats and snacks readily available. So how can we as parents, continue with our healthy living goals over the holidays? One way is to plan for and choose healthy snacks as much as possible, while also allowing room for enjoying smaller portions of our favourite holiday foods.

Here are some healthy snack options and suggestions to keep you on track from dietitians:

1. Keep it simple: sliced fruit and vegetables are excellent snacks packed with nutrients and fibre to help keep you full and



satisfied. Tip: plain yogurt (mix in a small amount of ranch dressing for extra flavour), hummus, and salsas are tasty and satisfying vegetable dip options. For a healthy fruit dip try mixing plain yogurt with mashed berries and a bit of honey to sweeten.

2. Drink to your health: when possible choose non-alcoholic drinks such as sparkling water with lime or try a wine spritzer (half white wine and half sparkling water or club soda). If you enjoy diet drinks, consider having them in place of heavier drinks such as egg nog.
3. Pass on the chips: in place of high fat salty snacks like chips choose sliced pita bread (toast in the oven first to get the crispy texture), naan bread, or whole grain crackers.
4. Portion size counts: it's easy to overindulge when snacking! Take a look at your portion sizes and when possible plate your snacks; fill half of the plate with vegetable and fruit options.
5. Move that body: it's important to keep up on our exercise during the holidays. Sneak in a simple 15-30 minute walk whenever you can. Or try out some winter sports like snowshoeing, skating and skiing. Check out your local community centre and/or gym for indoor fun activity options.

## CHOOSING SAFE GIFTS

Children love to get toys for gifts over the holidays, but how can you make sure the toys that you (or Santa) give this holiday season are safe? Here are some tips:

**Examine toys carefully:** Make sure they don't have small parts that can be pulled off and swallowed. Any toy that can fit in a cardboard toilet paper roll (diameter 1¼ inches or three cm) can be a choking hazard for children under three years old.

**Choose age-appropriate toys:** Read and follow the age recommendations on toys. Age recommendations are often made for safety reasons.

**Avoid toys with magnets:** Toys that contain small magnets should not be given to children under six. Magnets can become loose and be swallowed. If your child swallows a magnet they should see a doctor immediately.

**Avoid toys with long strings or cords:** They can get caught around an infant or toddler's neck. Check for product recalls: Health Canada's [Consumer Product Safety website](#) lists products, including toys, which have been recalled by the manufacturer for safety concerns. Visit their [website](#) or call 1-866-662-0666. You can also call this number if you are out shopping and see a product that concerns you.

**Make sure battery-operated toys are in good condition:** Ensure batteries are securely locked inside toys to prevent easy access by your child. If chewed or swallowed, small button-style batteries can cause burns or poisoning.

For more information visit the Government of Canada [Toy Safety web page](#).



## DECK THE HALLS - SAFELY

The holidays are filled with beautiful decorations, delicious treats, and holiday cheer. Unfortunately, for infants and toddlers some of these items can be dangerous. Here are a few tips to keep the holidays happy and safe for everyone.

**Watch out for choking hazards:** Young children love to put things in their mouth. If an item is small enough to fit through a toilet paper roll, it is a potential choking hazard. Things to keep out of reach include:



- Small toys or toys with loose small parts.
- Bite-size party food like nuts or popcorn should not be given to children under age four.
- Small decorations like beads, ornaments, light bulbs, icicles, tinsel, and ornament hangers.

To learn more about choking hazards check out this [video](#) and read this [HealthLinkBC file](#).

**Beware of poisonous items:** Keep these items away from little hands and mouths:

- Plants: Many plants commonly used to decorate during the holidays such as mistletoe, holly, and poinsettias are poisonous and should be kept out of reach of children.
- Lights: Vintage style "[Bubble lights](#)" may contain a chemical that can be poisonous and cause burns or skin irritation.
- Alcohol: Alcohol poisoning is a risk for children during the holiday season. Kids like to imitate adults, so they may drink beverages they see adults drinking. Even a small amount of alcohol can be harmful to a child. When entertaining, remove drinks from tables as soon as possible and keep alcohol out of reach.
- Medications: While visiting family and friends ensure little ones don't get into any unsecured medications that may be in the house.

For more information about poison dangers during the holidays read [this article](#). For more information on how to keep your home safe this holiday season visit [Kids Health](#).

## NEWS YOU CAN USE



### Did you know?

A child's skin can burn in less than a second from the glass on a gas fireplace.

These fireplaces heat up in just six minutes and can take more than 45 minutes to cool down.

A child's skin burns four times faster than that of an adult.

[Learn more](#) about fireplace safety this winter.

## Sources and where to get more info

[Poison Control](#)  
[HealthLinkBC](#)  
[Health Canada](#)  
[Kids Health](#)

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This e-newsletter is an Interior Health project to provide quick and easy health tips for new parents and caregivers of children ages 0 to 2 years. Your comments and topic suggestions are welcome! Simply email us at: [healthmatters@interiorhealth.ca](mailto:healthmatters@interiorhealth.ca).

For more info or to attend a free child health clinic, contact your local Public Health Centre. You can find contact info online at: [www.interiorhealth.ca](http://www.interiorhealth.ca) or look it up under Interior Health in the blue pages of your local phone book.

Sincerely,  
Interior Health Authority

