

This issue features tips for managing the holidays when pregnant (or not), holiday safety tips and information about depression and stress during the holidays.



President's Letter, page 4.



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Enjoying the Holidays While Pregnant

It's not easy being pregnant during the holidays. Here are some tips to share with those moms-to-be to help them enjoy the holidays and deal with the extra stress that the holidays seem to bring.

Get plenty of rest. "Sleep, sleep and sleep some more," said one author. Sneak in naps when you can and go to bed early, without feeling guilty about it.

Be flexible and simplify this year. This applies to just about everything – decorating, baking, entertaining, being entertained.

Maintain a healthy diet. Enjoy the special foods that the holidays bring, but eat them in moderation. Wear comfortable clothes and shoes.

Ask for help. People love to help a pregnant woman, so take advantage of that!

Welcome guests if you feel up to it and decline them if you don't. Tell them why you can't have them visit. Or ask a partner, relative or friend to talk to them.

Pace yourself and don't overdo. "Avoid wearing yourself out...by tackling your to-do list early and focusing on one or two manageable tasks at a time," said the same author.

Enjoy yourself. "Eat, drink and be merry" – just remember, no alcohol!

Sources: "How to Navigate the Holidays During Pregnancy, WikiHow; "Enjoying the Holidays While Pregnant, " What to Expect; "Avoiding Stress During Pregnancy Over the Holidays," Our Family World.

Holiday Safety Tips with Babies & Toddlers

A new baby or a toddler might mean the need to rethink some of the holiday decorations and traditions. Here's some information to share with parents of young children:.

Tree: Keep the lower branches free of decorations to remove temptation. Consider putting a baby gate around the tree. Make sure artificial trees are labeled "fire resistant."



Lights: Get rid of old strands of lights that may be frayed or have loose sockets. Secure extension cords along the walls so baby doesn't pull them.

Decorations: Check wreaths and other decorations for small parts that little hands could pull off and put into their mouths. Avoid decorations that look like candy or other food.

Gift Wrap: Those wrapped presents under the tree are another temptation. Ribbons can get tangled around baby's neck. Best to keep them out of sight until time to open them. And then clean up immediately afterward – used ribbons and bows can be hazards, since they might have tape or even staples.

Food: Be careful of hot dishes or pans at a buffet. Small munchies put out before the big meal can be choking hazards for little ones. And, of course, don't leave alcoholic drinks lying around for children to decide to taste test.

Source: "Holiday Safety Tips for Baby," The Bump.

Getting off to a Healthy Start



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The National Healthy Start Association is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The mission of the NHSA is to be our nation's voice in providing leadership and advocacy for health equity services and interventions that improve birth outcomes and family well-being.

National Healthy Start Association
1325 G Street, NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005
202-295-2195
www.nationalhealthystart.org

Newsletter Editor: Bea Haskins
Contributing Writers: Deborah Frazier, Sheree Keitt, Ken Scarborough, Sekou Clincy

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Postpartum Depression Intervention Training

Postpartum depression is a common public health problem with serious and lasting consequences for mother and child. Overall, the incidence is 1:7 pregnant women, but it is 1:3 among low-income women. National Healthy Start Association is partnering with Michigan State University to offer free training and technical support for the Reaching Out, Stay Strong, Essentials for Mothers and Newborns (ROSE) program. This ROSE intervention is for preventing postpartum depression and is not affiliated with Reaching Our Sisters Everywhere breastfeeding organization. ROSE has been shown to prevent half of the cases of postpartum depression among low income women. The program can be offered on its own but also integrates well into Healthy Start Programs for pregnant women.



The ROSE Program is an empirically-validated prevention intervention for postpartum depression and has been cited in the new U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommendation regarding prevention of perinatal depression. The program is usually delivered in four prenatal sessions, with one post-natal follow-up phone call by the research team. It can be offered individually or in group, in the office, at women's homes or by telemedicine. Topics include psychoeducation on postpartum depression, managing the transition to motherhood, managing relationships (including relationships with the baby's father), self-care, assertiveness and goal-setting and a review session. Materials are free.

Benefits of Participating

- Free initial training for an evidence-based postpartum prevention intervention and tools for sustainability, including technical assistance on implementing, such as billing and staffing.
- Free program that includes the ROSE manual, a workbook with handouts, and an interventionist's guide.
- Free assistance with challenging issues related to delivery or participants' responses
- Training and assistance is provided via distance technology, making scheduling less complicated.

You can also find out more about this unique opportunity by contacting ROSES.Study@msu.edu.

NHSA will host an informational webinar on January 8, 2020, at 1:00 PM ET. Click [here](#) for more information or to register. Please email skeitt@nationalhealthystart.org if you have any questions.

Healthy Start Project Directors: Send Us Your Consumer Success Stories!

NHSA wants to spotlight consumers in future issues of *Getting off to a Healthy Start*. We have a form with sample questions to help you interview your consumer. To request the form, send an email to bhaskins@nationalhealthystart.org. If you already have a story, send it in, along with photos of your consumer and family! (Make sure you have a waiver form in your files, of course.)

Research News: *Hot* Stats and *Fast* Facts

True or False: Depression is More Prevalent During the Holidays

“Depression tends to increase during the holidays due to an increase in demands (perceived as stressful), family issues, and being unable to manage expectations,” says psychologist Anita Sanz.¹ But states Randy Hillard, a psychiatrist, “The fact is, however, that *fewer* people report to psychiatric emergency rooms just before Christmas than at other times of the year... studies show that hospital admissions, suicide attempts and completions, and even letters to advice columnists go down just before Christmas, then go back up immediately afterwards.”²

So what’s the real story? It might depend on which article you read. Or it might be a question of terminology. What some people call depression might actually be a case of “the blues,” which are normal and most people experience the sense of being sad or down at some time in their lives. Depression, on the other hand, is a “pervasive feeling of sadness [that] exits most days for a period of two weeks,” according to Ben Martin, PsyD.³

The blues could come from feeling stressed. And, by the way, according to one article, “Holiday stress has a particular impact on women, who take charge of many of the celebrations...holiday stress has an impact on lower middle income individuals...their worries about money are heightened by the commercialization of the season and the pressure to spend a lot of money.”⁴ See page 1 for some tips on managing holiday stress, which can help battle the blues. But if it’s really depression, seek professional help immediately. Don’t wait until the holidays are over.

OK, So What About Suicide During the Holidays?

Nope, it’s a myth that suicides rise during the holidays. According to a press release from The Annenberg Public Policy Center, “The rate of suicide in the U.S. is in fact lowest in December, and peaks in the spring and fall. Data collected by the National Center for Health Statistics show that this pattern has not changed in recent years.”⁵ The release says that the suicide-holiday falsehood is perpetuated by the media, when they should be helping to debunk the myth.⁶

Domestic Violence Surely Increases During the Holidays, Right?

Wrong again, says the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence. “[D]ata available from the [National Domestic Violence Hotline \(NDVH\)](#) shows a decline in the number of calls received during the holidays, including on New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day. Whether or not domestic violence programs experience shifts in the number of survivors accessing services during the holidays, there are unique opportunities and challenges to consider as victim advocates provide services to survivors and their families during this time.”⁷

Average Calls vs. Christmas and New Year’s Holidays – Number of Calls to NDVH, 2008-2017⁸

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017*
<i>Average 17 day period</i>	10512	10764	13518	13140	13050	12150	12801	14229	14093	12410
Dec 15 to Jan 1	10094	8367	12259	9958	9788	10991	12565	12508	13092	9956
<i>Average 13 day period</i>	8176	8372	10514	10220	10150	9450	9789	10881	10777	9490
Jan 2 to Jan 15	9413	7511	10702	9161	9001	9644	11136	10351	10871	9032
<i>Average Day</i>	584	598	751	730	725	675	753	837	829	730
Christmas Eve	452	304	470	420	421	503	584	530	531	371
Christmas Day	394	258	374	359	355	381	421	450	560	380
New Year’s Eve	669	422	569	398	395	546	579	616	634	368
New Year’s Day	508	341	604	429	499	570	591	611	650	513

Sources for the information on this page:

1 Sanz, Anita. Why Does Depressions Tend to Increase During the Holidays? Click [here](#).

2 Hillard, Randy. Christmas Depression: The Data May Surprise You. Click [here](#).

3 Martin, Ben. Depression vs. The Blues. Click [here](#).

4 Greenberg, Anna & Berkfold, Jennifer. Holiday Stress. Click [here](#).

5,6 The Annenberg Public Policy Center. Winter Holiday Suicide Myth Continues to be Reinforced in Press. Click [here](#).

7 National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRCDV). Holiday Toolbox. Click [here](#).

8 NRCDV. Effect of the Holidays on Calls to the National Domestic Violence Hotline. Click [here](#).

* On October 1, 2017, the National Domestic Violence Hotline adopted the practice of no longer including calls abandoned within 15 seconds of contacting the hotline in the total number of calls received.

There are many resources online with tips to manage stress during the holidays and/or when pregnant.

Getting off to a Healthy Start



Greetings from NHTA's President

This year has brought us so much success at the National Healthy Start Association! The blessings of new funding opportunities have allowed us to partner with our Healthy Start community to nationally fund programs to address perinatal health disparities.

In reflecting and celebrating nearly 17 years of supporting the Healthy Start program, I was truly humbled to see many of you our **Summit on Fatherhood and the Healthy and Wellness of Men and Boys** and our annual conference, **Standing in the Gap: Addressing Equity and the Impact of Racism on Health Outcomes for Women, Children,**

Fathers, Families, and Communities held in October. This year we connected with over 60 projects and provided a snapshot of our wondrous beginnings, offered examples of best practices from the field and launched the vision of our future success.

As we approach 2020, we are looking to partner with all our members in a new but old tradition. We will open the call for nominations to recruit new board members, our subcommittees will be opened to the association members to support our innovative strategic plan and we look forward to helping the training needs of the Healthy Start workforce.

As we close this year out, I wanted to acknowledge the passing of one of the NHTA founding members, Salim Al-Nurridin, who we affectionately called the grandfather of Healthy Start in Illinois. Through his efforts, we have been vigilant and committed to making sure that all families have a voice. We continue to be amazed by your undying commitment to support the association.

During this Holiday season, I hope that you take time to not only nurture our Healthy Start participants and community but also to celebrate you and gifts that you bring to the world.

Timika Anderson Reeves M.S.W.



Timika Anderson Reeves, MSW, NHTA President

NATIONAL HEALTHY START ASSOCIATION
2019-2024 STRATEGIC PLAN

MISSION
 To be our nation's voice in providing leadership and advocacy for health equity, services and interventions that improve birth outcomes and family well-being.

VISION STATEMENT
 The NHTA is a recognized leader in and advocate for reducing infant mortality and perinatal disparities and the need for maternal and child health programs and services.

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Click the image above to see the 2019-2024 Strategic Plan.

Attention Healthy Start Project Directors!

- Do you have a project newsletter? Be sure to include NHTA in your distribution list so we can include your news in *Getting off to a Healthy Start!* Please add Bea Haskins, our newsletter editor, bhaskins@nationalhealthystart.org.
- Do you have project staff you'd like to be on *our* distribution list? Send their name, title and email address to Bea so she can add them!
- Make sure we have your Fatherhood Coordinator's name and email address, too!
- Not a Healthy Start Project? That's OK! Let us know if you want to add someone to our distribution list.

Interview with Tamela Milan

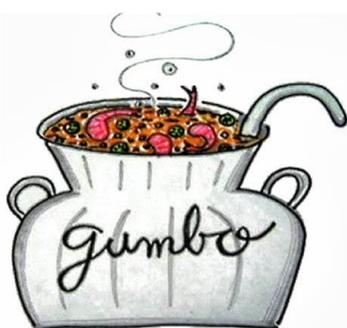
Milan, who was NHTA's first consumer representative on NHTA's Board of Directors, is now the CAN Coordinator for Westside Healthy Start in Chicago.

Watch this interview of her at the American Academy of Pediatrics national conference in 2018: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?>

What the NHSA Administrative and Program Staff is Doing for the Holidays!

Deborah Frazier, CEO: Every family probably has its own Christmas or holiday traditions and our family is no exception. In fact, tradition is what most of us look forward to and what is most etched in our memories when we recall a special event. Again, our family is no exception. The Frazier household has five daughters and over the years we have also had our share of yearly exchange students from different parts of the world who shared our traditions and allowed us to share a special tradition that they missed from home. One year, Fran's Mom sent special treats from Germany. Paula would sometimes prepare one of her favorite yucca dishes and while she bragged that her holiday tradition included a trip to the beach preceded by a holiday meal that included her Mom's tamales – the best in her country – no tamales ever made it to us! The deal was and is that we had to travel to Costa Rico to sample these tamales. Ditto for the exchange daughters from the other countries – Japan, Brazil and Argentina. These exchange daughters observed an American holiday season and experienced our big family Christmas traditions. They also brought lively conversations about the holiday celebration in their respective countries and in each of their families. We were all richer for the shared experiences. As for the Frazier family – did you guess that food is a big part of the Christmas holiday tradition?

Our family has grown with marriages, grandkids and addition of new cultures and traditions. This year we are enthusiastically looking forward to a family roast pig event two days prior to Christmas. We all know that Christmas eve morning is reserved for last minute cooking, gift wrapping and then preparation for traditional family church service, our Christmas eve Mass. This year, we are thinking of restoring the New Orleans custom of *Reveillon*, a traditional Christmas eve menu served after Midnight Mass. Although we suspect – and hope – that the little ones will be asleep, the adults are looking forward to reviving this old cultural tradition.



Christmas Day belongs to the children. The day begins with family brunch, usually a shrimp and grits casserole and a French toast casserole before our Christmas tree adventure. Our only rule is that no one enters the room with the Christmas tree and gifts until all of the children have arrived and they all enter together to see the tree surrounded with gifts. It's a fun family gift exchange with eight grandkids, parents and extended family.

Our family has deep South Louisiana roots and that means a holiday dinner tradition of big pot of gumbo! No holiday happens without a bowl of seafood/meat/sausage-rich gumbo! All of our extended and exchange families found what we knew – that there is something about a pot of gumbo that speaks to the culinary senses, but most certainly speaks to a sense of genuine family and cultural tradition. And after gumbo, the dinner menu can vary. However, some of us would like oyster dressing and *mirliton/chayote* prepared with shrimp and smoked ham as side dishes.

For almost 20 years, we have had a family movie activity the day after Christmas. The movie is nominated and selected almost two months in advance and the organizer(s) arranges the group ticket purchase. This year is a *Star Wars* movie year and we will all be there for the 12:30 show with our Star Wars shirts – all 20 of us! Aren't traditions fun?!

Note from the Editor: Deborah sent an email after sending the above article, saying that she forgot the Christmas Pajama Party and game night! I think we need pictures, don't you?

Sheree Keitt, SHSP Senior Program Manager: My husband and I reserve Thanksgiving for time with my side of the family because of a holiday tradition that I loved as a child. The tradition is to put the Christmas tree up the day after Thanksgiving and play the first song of the holiday season, which is Nat King Cole's version of *The Christmas Song*. We do this regardless of where we are each year, be it our home, my mother's home in Florida, or one of my siblings' homes. It brings back old childhood memories and allows us to create new memories with our children.



Artwork used with permission from Kreations by Kara.

Continued on page 8.

Getting off to a Healthy Start

Hanukkah and Kwanzaa are Celebrated This Time of Year, Too!

Kwanzaa

Make Kwanzaa Gifts: Families set aside time on the first day of Kwanzaa to make handmade gifts to exchange during the karamu (feast). Typically, gifts are handmade and educational, teaching something about the heritage of people of African descent.

Honor Ancestors and Elders: In local communities or among church youth groups, young people visit nursing homes and senior centers to celebrate Kwanzaa with residents. Thoughtful visitors might bring small gifts for the residents, like bookmarks or socks with Kwanzaa-colored trim.

Wear Traditional African Clothing: Though traditional African garb can be worn year round, many people wear it during the seven days of Kwanzaa or at the Kwanzaa feast or karamu. By wearing African garb, revelers reinforce cultural identity and the Kwanzaa principles of unity, creativity, and cooperative economics.



Plan Special Meals: Food is an integral part of the celebration. On each day of the Kwanzaa celebration, hosts include a dish from a different country in the African diaspora. By enjoying national dishes from Africa, the Caribbean, and South America, Americans can learn more about these foreign cultures and customs. Kwanzaa meals might include Jollof Rice, a traditional West African dish, jerk meats from the Caribbean, and black beans that are popular in Caribbean and South American dishes.

Enjoy a Kwanzaa Feast: The Kwanzaa karamu can be an intimate event with close family and friends, or a large community celebration. This menu can be a cooperative effort with each person bringing a dish. These dishes can be family favorites or foods of one particular country. In the spirit of Kwanzaa and learning about African heritage, some families and churches select one country, and the entire karamu menu includes dishes and foods from that specified land.

Hanukkah



Light the Menorah: The centerpiece of the Hanukkah celebration is the hanukkiah or menorah, a candelabra that holds nine candles. Eight candles symbolize the number of days that the Temple lantern blazed; the ninth, the shamash, is a helper candle used to light the others. Families light one candle on the first day, two on the second (and so on) after sundown during the eight days of Hanukkah, while reciting prayers and singing songs. The menorah is filled from right to left, but lit left to right so each new candle is lit first.

Sing Songs: Hanukkah – one of the most family-oriented of Jewish holidays – comes with its own set of carols sung around the glowing menorah. These celebrate everything from the glory of God and the ancient Temple of the Jews ("Maoz Tzur") to the simplicity of a dreidel, as in "Dreidel, dreidel, dreidel/I made it out of clay/ And when it's dry and ready/Dreidel I shall play."

Enjoy Fried Treats: There's nothing low-fat about Hanukkah – the traditional foods of the holiday are deep-fried and caloric. In honor of the oil-y miracle at the center of Hanukkah—the story of the lamp in the Temple burning bright for eight days even though there was only enough fuel for one day – Jews eat oily foods like [latkes](#) (potato pancakes) and [sufganyot](#) (jelly-filled doughnuts).

Dreidels: It's customary to play with [dreidels](#) (spinning tops) during the holiday, even wage gambling games in which players guess which side of the top will fall face up. The Hebrew characters carved into the four sides of today's dreidels are the first letters of "Ness Gadol Haya Po/Sham," which roughly translates to "Great Miracle Happened Here/ There" (depending on whether you're in Israel or not).

Gold Coins: The tradition of handing out gelt (the Yiddish word for "money") during Hanukkah probably dates back to 17th-century Poland. The practice is most likely a nod to the fact that the only time Jews were historically free to mint their own coins, in their own state, was after the Maccabean revolt, when the land around Jerusalem was governed by Jewish kings for over a century. The coins distributed during Hanukkah – either real currency or chocolate-covered coins – are thus a symbol of Jewish independence. They're also just a way to spread good cheer with things people can always use more of: cash and chocolate.

Sources: "Kwanzaa History & Traditions" and "Hanukkah History & Traditions," both from Better Homes & Gardens, www.bhg.com/holidays.



News and Resources for Dads and Programs that Work with Fathers/Men

Christmas is a special time for families. The presence of dads are particularly important beyond their ability to provide gifts and finances only. Although kids love gifts, that is typically a temporary feeling of happiness. Spending quality time and doing memorable activities comes with longer memory for both the child and the father.

We have seen how kids only play with those desired toys and gifts for a couple of days and then move on to the next thing. But what we see below through one of the Healthy Start Fatherhood Programs will not only provide a memorable experience for dad and possibly child, but it becomes a key part of ensuring a healthy start for the kids and their family. Learning the value of preparing healthy foods is not only important during the holiday season, but it can create a lifelong experience for dad, the child and for the family for generations to come.

Thank you, Sekou, and your Tulsa Team, for sharing this very meaningful activity that is a good practice for all projects.

Cooking Demonstration

The Community Service Council Healthy Start Fatherhood Program hosted a Cooking Demonstration for fathers in collaboration with Oklahoma State University Extension on Wednesday, December 4th. Participants had an opportunity to sample a healthy meal and learn how to prepare nutritious food. Further, this cooking demonstration promoted wellness and chronic disease prevention for healthy men. Each participant received a free copy of the *The Full Plate Diet* book.



← & ↑ Dads and kids at the Cooking Demonstration.



→ Demonstration on food preparation.

↓ Book given to all participants.



Submitted by Sekou Clincy, Healthy Start Fatherhood Coordinator, Community Services Council, Tulsa, OK, and Ken Scarborough, Where Dads Matter Consultant.

Attention Healthy Start Fatherhood Coordinators and Project Directors!

The above story is a perfect example of what we want to showcase in our newsletter. Whether it is a mom-focused, dad-centered or kids' activity, we want photos with details! Send them to [Bea Haskins](#), Newsletter Editor.

Have you invited your Members of Congress to visit your project? Click [here](#) for a link to the 2020 Congressional calendars so you'll know when they will be in the district. But even if they're not scheduled to be "home," they can delegate a staffperson to attend. They'll appreciate the invitation and it will be a great chance to talk to them about the Healthy Start Reauthorization Act! Don't forget to take photos!

Getting off to a Healthy Start

NHSA's Team Celebrates the Holidays, continued from page 5

Bea Haskins, Newsletter Editor: The season technically began the Saturday after Thanksgiving when one granddaughter put up my tree and several of my great-granddaughters helped decorate it. Almost every ornament is unique and I tell the story of each one as we unwrap it. Another great-granddaughter helped with the rest of the decorations – of which, my daughter says, there are just too many! Most years, we have a cookie decorating night, too.

I have two children, seven grandchildren (ages 4 to 33) and seven great grandchildren (from 3 to 13). Older grandchildren work weekends. One is in the Army Reserves and has “drill” once a month. Another is in his high school orchestra and band, runs cross country and is a Sea Cadet, which also means drill once a month. And they all have other families with whom to celebrate. So I decided a number of years ago to have “Big Family Christmas” a few weeks *before* Christmas and then I just get out of everyone’s way! By doing it early, I also get the advantage of the kids still being excited about Christmas.

On December 14th, 17 of 18 of us gathered at my house in Hanover, PA, for dinner and gift exchange, where each person has one other person to whom they give a present. (One great granddaughter had “other obligations.”) My old great granddaughter and I filled the stockings. And we had a treasure hunt with prizes, which is a relatively new tradition, started four Christmases ago and which has become very popular. This year, we had a ham dinner; sometimes,

it’s lasagna. We vote each year to see which it will be. The day is loud, exhausting and utterly the best day of the year for me to have everyone gathered under one roof at the same time.

But it wasn’t over! On Saturday, December 21st, I drove to Baltimore and eight of us went to the Baltimore Conservatory for their annual poinsettia display. This began when my two oldest grandsons were very young and just the three of us went. Then there was another grandson...and now, it’s all those grandsons, a great-grandson and anyone else who wants to join each year. Those boys and I look for cacti and other plants that we’ve been watching for 15 or more years to see how they’ve grown.

And then, finally, it’s time to take down the decorations, followed by a big sigh of relief from everyone after another fun Christmas!

(My 4-year-old grandson said this year’s Big Family Christmas was “the best party ever!” I take that compliment with a grain of salt, as he had the *biggest* present and that may have influenced his view. See picture at right.)



“And the stockings were hung...” at Bea’s house. Molly the cat is on the left.



We take a picture every year in the same location at the Conservatory. ↑ This is from 2018.

↗ *And this is from 2014.*



Coming in January!



- Meet two new consultants for the AIM project and new NHSA staff!
- More entries in the “Then & Now” series, telling the stories of the original 22 Healthy Start grantees. Look for an article on Healthy Start New Orleans and maybe one other project!
- Photos and stories from the Healthy Start projects’ holiday events.

Holiday Health and Safety Tips from the CDC

The holidays are a great opportunity to enjoy time with family and friends, celebrate life, to be grateful, and reflect on what's important. They are also a time to appreciate the gift of health. Here are some holiday tips to support your efforts for health and safety this season.

Wash your hands often. Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps you can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Wash your hands with soap and clean running water, and rub them together for at least 20 seconds. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands.

Stay warm. Cold temperatures can cause serious health problems, especially in infants and older adults. Stay dry, and dress warmly in several layers.

Manage stress. The holidays don't need to take a toll on your health and pocketbook. Keep your commitments and spending in check. Balance work, home, and play. Get support from family and friends. Keep a relaxed and positive outlook. Make sure to get proper sleep.

Travel safely. Whether you're traveling across town or around the world, help ensure your trip is safe. Don't drink and drive, and don't let someone else drink and drive. Wear a seat belt every time you drive or ride in a motor vehicle. Always buckle your child in the car using a child safety seat, booster seat, or seat belt appropriate for his/her height, weight, and age.

Be smoke-free. Avoid smoking and breathing other people's smoke. If you smoke, quit today! Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW or talk to your health care provider for help.

Get check-ups and vaccinations. Exams and screenings can help find potential problems early, when the chances for treatment and cure are often better. Vaccinations help prevent diseases and save lives. Schedule a visit with your health care provider for needed exams and screenings. Ask what vaccinations and tests you should get based on your age, lifestyle, travel plans, medical history, and family health history.

Watch the kids. Children are at high risk for injuries. Keep a watchful eye on your kids when they're eating and playing. Keep potentially dangerous toys, food, drinks, household items, choking hazards (like coins and hard candy), and other objects out of kids' reach. Learn how to provide early treatment for children who are choking. Make sure toys are used properly. Develop rules about acceptable and safe behaviors, including using electronic media.

Prevent injuries. Injuries can happen anywhere, and some often occur around the holidays. Use step stools instead of climbing on furniture when hanging decorations. Leave the fireworks to the professionals. Wear a helmet when riding a bicycle or skateboarding to help prevent head injuries. Keep vaccinations up to date. Most residential fires occur during the winter months. Keep candles away from children, pets, walkways, trees, and curtains. Never leave fireplaces, stoves, or candles unattended. Don't use generators, grills, or other gasoline- or charcoal-burning devices inside your home or garage. Install a smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector in your home. Test them once a month, and replace batteries twice a year.

Handle and prepare food safely. As you prepare holiday meals, keep yourself and your family safe from food-related illness. Wash hands and surfaces often. Avoid cross-contamination by keeping raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs (including their juices) away from ready-to-eat foods and eating surfaces. Cook foods to the proper temperature. Refrigerate promptly. Do not leave perishable foods out for more than two hours.



Eat healthy and be active. With balance and moderation, you can enjoy the holidays the healthy way. Choose fresh fruit as a festive and sweet substitute for candy. Select just one or two of your favorites from the host of tempting foods. Find fun ways to stay active, such as dancing to your favorite holiday music. Be active for at least 150 minutes per week with moderate-intensity aerobic activity, such as a brisk walk that makes your heart beat faster. Help kids and teens be active for at least one hour a day.

Source: Click [here](#) for *Holiday Health and Safety Tips*, with "The 12 Ways to Holiday Health Song."

Getting off to a Healthy Start

Healthy Start Projects Celebrate the Holidays!

Heart of Georgia Healthy Start



↑ Goodie bags inspired by Rudolph, The Red Nosed Reindeer. There were 19 consumers and 10 children in attendance at the event!

→ & ↓ Consumers and guests enjoy the Laurens County Christmas Consumer Support Group on December 10th at the Moore Street School in Dublin, GA.



Gift of Life Healthy Start, Montgomery, AL



← Gift of Life held its holiday Group Connections for Healthy Start families on December 10th. The festive event included crafts, an activity station, pictures with Santa, a delicious lunch and prize giveaways. One of the highlights of the event included a special reading of 'Twas the Night Before Christmas, by GOL Parent Educator Denise Coulter, seen here reading to some of their families.

↓ & ↘ GOL Healthy Start Addressed Diaper Need with Operation Christmas Bottoms!

This holiday season, Gift of Life Healthy Start launched **Operation: Christmas Bottoms Diaper and Baby Wipes Drive** to help address diaper need for some of the 400 families it serves in Montgomery, Macon, Autauga, Pike, Russell and Crenshaw counties. Flyers were disseminated to area churches, schools and community organizations. The project was also heavily promoted on social media and on local radio.

"We know that for many low-income families, diaper need is a heartbreaking reality," said Mona Davis, Gift of Life Community Action Network Coordinator. "The stress of not being able to provide diapers, plus the tendency to leave baby in a soiled diaper longer than a parent would like increases baby's risks for diaper rash and UTIs. But fortunately, we live in a community that cares about our moms and babies. Response to the drive has been great--- so much so that we will extend the drive through the end of January 2020," Davis said. The drive launched in November. So far, more than 40 cases and single packs of diapers and 23 cases and single packs of wipes have been given. Donors names were listed on the Operation Christmas Bottoms page on the GOL website and on GOL's social media platforms. "Churches, schools, health organizations, former clients, local media and individuals have all helped us. We couldn't be more pleased that the community is helping us meet this need," said Davis.



↑ The Matrons Ministry of Antioch Baptist Church in Mt. Meigs, Alabama, presented GOL Executive Director Dr. Regina Traylor with a large donation of diapers and wipes for GOL's Operation Christmas Bottoms Diaper Drive.

More Holiday Photos from the Projects!

Family Tree Healthy Start (Lafayette, LA)



← *Santa came early for Healthy Start! Donations from the Family Tree's board members, the Junior League of Lafayette and friends of the Family Tree adopted some of the program's Healthy Start participants and helped give them a magical holiday season.*

Healthy Start Projects!

Does your project have regular baby showers or parenting classes, maybe support groups? Send us photos for *Getting off to a Healthy Start!* It's a great way to spread the word about what your project is doing! Send to **Bea Haskins**.

And A Late Halloween Entry for Your Enjoyment



↑ *North College Hill Advisory Board, along with Asha Clements from Cradle Cincinnati and North College Hill City Manager Ron Mosby.*

Cradle Cincinnati Connections, OH

Did you know? Cradle Cincinnati Connections serves families in North College Hill, Ohio, AND supports the Queens Village North College Hill Advisory Board, a group of Black women from the community who come together to relax, re-power and take care of one another. On Halloween, the North College Hill Advisory Board held its first-ever harvest party, with more than 75 moms, dads and children in attendance! Families with children of all ages joined for dinner, crafts, costumes, games and a dance party – even the North College Hill City Manager stopped by. Thanks to the leadership of the advisory board, this party was a wonderful success.



↙ & ↗ Families from North College Hill.

In the coming months, Cradle Cincinnati hopes to convene similar advisory boards in their other neighborhoods as they continue to support, empower and bring together families in Hamilton County, Ohio.



Healthy Start Project Directors and Staff!

Send us photos and news stories from your holiday events for inclusion in the next issue of *Getting off to a Healthy Start!*

And remember to invite your elected officials – federal, state and local – to your events and be sure to take pictures of them!

Don't forget your consumer stories or "Healthy Start in the News."

Send everything to **bhaskins@nationalhealthystart.org**.