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CHRISTMAS– A STRESSFUL TIME of YEAR" by Dr. Brian S. Seaman, DC, FCCSS(C), FICC

'Twas the night before Christmas when all through the town –

- Some of you will be doing last minute shopping, or
- Preparing for visiting family and friends,
- Trying to wrap and ship those parcels out west, down South or overseas,
- And generally trying to find that extra hour or two that just doesn't seem to exist, and
- Wondering in amazement how fast the time is slipping away!

In talking to friends, family and patients, some of the most common comments I hear every year are that "I should have started shopping earlier" and "Next year I will not plan on attending as many dinners, parties and functions". These comments are usually accompanied by complaints of not enough sleep and being tired for most of December and into early January. That is when the colds and flu-bugs will tend to get the best of you.

It is important over the holiday and festive season to 'pace yourself'. It is tempting to try and attend every dinner, luncheon and party. Admit it – you cannot do it all! Learn to pace yourself – be sure you get proper rest, and watch your diet. Yes – the food is tempting and straying a little bit away from your usual dietary habits may be okay – but over-indulgence can bloat our stomachs, upset our systems and add a few pounds.

Be sure not to forget exercising. December and Summer holidays are the most common times that we tend to get out of the habit of our regular fitness and exercise programs. This is especially important if you are experiencing neck or back pain for which your health care professional has prescribed specific exercises – **remember neck and back pain do not take holidays!** Exercise will also help to reduce our stress levels and offset extra calories.

Pacing Yourself

- Be sure not to schedule something festive everyday.
- Get your proper rest – stick to your regular sleep hours as much as possible – especially on the weekend.
- Allow ample time for travelling – leave early if driving or going to the airport.
- Do not try to finish your shopping in a couple of hours. Rushing around is tiring. Remember traffic is heavier and people tend to be a little less attentive when driving. Be cautious.
- Exercise regularly – even a brief walk will help but watch for those icy sidewalks!
- Watch your diet – avoid too many sweets and rich meals.

Feeling a Bit Stressed

The ideas listed above will help. It is important not to let the season get the better of us health-wise – emotionally or physically.

Financial well being is also important. Be sure not to overextend yourself in the bank book either! Many of you probably wonder how this relates to your overall health. The stress associated with over-spending during the holiday season can be overwhelming. Generally, people are becoming much more penny-wise.

Perhaps not surprising is that only 60% of men set a budget compared to 75% of women. Atlantic Canadian's were the largest percentage of cost-conscious shoppers.

Best times to shop are apparently morning and evening (after 5pm) – personally I usually try supertime and midnight madness sales after 9pm. The busiest time is 3pm to 5pm daily which makes sense as a lot of people will leave work a bit early or drop into the mall on the way home from work.

A Few More "Stress Buster" Tips



- Drink plenty of water. The dry air of Winter tends to dry out our skin and mucous membranes in our eyes, nose and throat – this can lead to flus and colds.
- Soak in a hot tub with Epsom salts with some relaxing music and candlelight. This can be very calming after a hectic day. Be sure not to fall asleep in the tub – set an alarm clock or have your spouse check on you or have a friend give you a call.
- If the day seems to be getting out of control – find a quiet spot and take a few deep breaths. It is something you can do anywhere and at any time.

Best Wishes

Finally my best wishes to all of you during this holiday and festive season. May the New Year bring you health and happiness.

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