

STRENGTHENING THE ENERGISER LES **FORCES**

Healthy Holiday Tips Newsletter: December 2022

This year's holiday season is glimmering with renewed hope and optimism. For many, the holidays bring occasions to celebrate and opportunities to be with the ones we love.

Strengthening the Forces invites you to read through this newsletter offering information to help keep you healthy and safe this holiday season. We are featuring articles on how you can [nudge your loved ones and colleagues to increase physical activities](#), consider [budget friendly nutritious holiday gatherings](#), and [celebrate safely in the context of alcohol and substance use](#); and an [invitation to renew your commitment to your wellbeing, self-compassion and relaxation](#) during this busy season. Each of these articles provides wonderful links to extra resources. We hope you enjoy the feature articles and health tips provided by our team. To promote health around you, please share these articles broadly with your staff, colleagues and loved ones!

As you plan and prepare for this year's holiday festivities, please continue to follow the current recommendations to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in your area. Booster vaccine doses are recommended and will help to keep you, your friends, and your family well. We encourage you to get your COVID-19 booster shot to promote safe gatherings.

Happy Holidays!

Strengthening the Forces is CAF/DND's health promotion program providing expert information, skills and tools for promoting and improving CAF members' health and well-being.

Entertaining tips to save you money

Rising food costs can be a challenge, especially when feeding a group. Links for recipes and more nutritional information are at the end of this article.

Here are some tips for healthy, stylish and budget-friendly entertaining:

1. Plan – invest a bit of time to save money.

Planning can save time and money with menus, preparing food and even décor. Make a master list of the menu, what needs to be bought and what can be done ahead of time. With planning, you can scout flyers for deals and avoid rushing for a forgotten item. Safely storing leftovers also needs a plan so those food dollars do not go to waste. Consider hosting breakfasts or lunches

instead of dinners for a less costly get-together. When guests ask what they can bring, have a plan so that you can share the cost and the workload.

- [Menu Planning Checklist - Unlock Food](#)

2. For starters.

Appetizers can be expensive. Cut costs by re-imagining the usual offerings. Instead of preparing a classic cheese platter, consider smaller cubes of cheese served with vegetables or fruit. Lower-cost options for vegetable trays include preparing them yourself, cutting whole carrots, tomatoes and cucumbers rather than having a store bought tray. Homemade hummus costs pennies to prepare compared to a grocery store alternative. Serve with whole grain pita and sturdy, less expensive vegetables like white turnip, celery and carrot sticks. A homemade pureed vegetable soup is an elegant and satisfying starter.

3. Delicious main dishes.

Consider adding more inexpensive plant-based dishes featuring legumes (beans, chickpeas, and lentils). Offering vegetarian fare means having one main dish that everyone can eat. Think Mexican black beans, Moroccan chickpeas, or curried lentils. For a side dish, cook whole grains like brown rice, barley or wheat berries with a tasty broth, spices and seasonings.

If you're serving meat, give it a supporting role rather than the starring role. By using less expensive cuts and adding legumes and more vegetables, you can stretch your meal dollars. Less costly cuts of meats or poultry may need longer simmering time to tenderize them. As a bonus, these cuts also tend to be much fuller in flavour. Dishes such as Moroccan tagines, Italian chicken and chickpea cacciatore, as well as beef and lentil curries are flavourful and company worthy. Humble casseroles look fancier in individual serving dishes. A garnish of freshly chopped herbs adds colour and fresh aromas. It can make your budget dish Instagram worthy. Colourful vegetables are also a styling trick and not just a nutrition tip!

Add entertainment with a "build your own bowl" theme by setting out individual ingredients in pretty bowls or platters. Use whole grains, beans, maybe a little meat, lots of shredded or roasted vegetables, a crunchy garnish and top with a homemade sauce. Any cuisine can be a theme. Try Mediterranean falafel, burrito bean, Vietnamese noodle or leftover turkey dinner bowls. Voila, fun for all ages!

4. Sweet finish: dessert ideas.

A simple fruit salad is a refreshing way to end a meal while satisfying a sweet tooth. Fruit adds natural sweetness and packs a lot of nutrients. Consider using seasonal apples or pears or frozen fruit to trim costs. A fruit crisp or cobbler is an easy way to feed a crowd and can be up-scaled by baking them in individual oven-proof dishes.

5. Set the table, set the scene.

Taking the time to carefully set the table creates an inviting mood. Treating your guests to your nicest dishes makes them feel special and doesn't cost anything. Focus on creating a relaxing

atmosphere and enjoying good food together. By preparing your meal in advance, you can relax and enjoy time with your guests. Eating a meal with family and friends is an opportunity to connect and share traditions. Gathering with others can be part of healthy way of staying socially connected! Guests will remember the company and the experience just as much as the food you served.

Budget friendly holiday recipes:

- [Beet Hummus - Unlock Food](#)
- [Carrot ginger lentil soup - Canada's Food Guide](#)
- [Spaghetti Squash and Salmon Bowl \(One pan\) recipe – Unlock Food](#)
- [Slow-cooker burrito bowls - Canada's Food Guide](#)
- [Apple berry crisp - Canada's Food Guide](#)

Tips for lower cost meals:

- [10 Tips for Planning Meals on a Budget - Unlock Food](#)

Tips for healthy eating:

- [The Canadian Food Guide](#)
 - [Tips for healthy eating - Canada's Food Guide](#)
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A Healthy Holiday Plan: Renew, Review, Revive

Are you wondering how you are going to get everything done for the upcoming holidays? If so, you are not alone. While holidays can be a significant source of stress in their own right, doing a little planning in advance to set aside some time to take care of yourself can help manage stress. The upcoming holidays can also be a great opportunity for you to reduce your stress and start the New Year with a commitment to **taking care of your personal wellbeing**. Check out the great ideas below on how to renew your commitment to yourself, review your schedule, and revive a relaxation activity to improve your mental health and wellbeing!

1. Renew your commitment to yourself.

Renew your commitment to yourself and to your wellbeing. In the hustle and bustle of everyday life, with work, family, and friends, one's own needs can be neglected. Holidays may present an opportunity to begin focusing on **your wellbeing**. Start your day by committing to putting yourself first.

2. **Show yourself some loving kindness.**

Studies show that kindness can improve your mental health. Learn more about it here: [Loving kindness - Anxiety Canada](#).

3. **Set aside time each day to disconnect.**

Disconnect from emails, social media, and even answering the phone throughout the day and reconnect to the here and now. Spoil yourself with the gift of time to just be in the moment.

4. **Review your schedule.**

Too many late nights, heavy meals, and over-committing to social activities can turn your holiday time into just another to-do list. Get ahead of your holiday schedule by taking time in advance to plan, prioritize what you would like to do, and set realistic expectations for yourself and others. You can revise your **holiday schedule** to suit yourself, your family, and your lifestyle. You can even choose to take a holiday from the holidays and create one with fewer activities. In the end, when you plan ahead for the holidays, it is easier to manage your stress.

5. **Revive a relaxation activity.**

You may have tried relaxation activities, like [progressive muscle relaxation](#), [abdominal breathing](#), or [mindfulness exercises](#), that have been helpful in the past; but perhaps they have fallen by the wayside for one reason or another. Take some time to recall what has worked, why you enjoyed it, and how you felt afterwards. **Choose one relaxation practice** to incorporate in your holiday plans by putting it into your schedule. That way, if you have other obligations or invitations to respond to, you will remember that time is already booked.

Consider including the above tips for your wellbeing. You are more likely to enjoy your holidays if you can set time aside to take care of your own needs by staying committed to renewing, reviewing, and reviving yourself.

There are many other ways to improve your mental health. Here are some additional links:

- [Promoting positive mental health - Canada.ca](#)
- [Coping with stress and anxiety | CAMH](#)

Celebrate Safely

Remember that whether you are meeting at the mess, a restaurant, someone's home, or virtually – **you can make healthy choices.**

This December, try a festive alcohol-free cocktail (otherwise known as a "[mocktail](#)") as a healthy alternative at your next gathering. You can also find many [healthy drink choices](#) in the Canada Food

Guide. If you do choose to drink alcohol, as always, be sure you have organized transportation to get you to and from your special events safely, now and throughout the year.

Here are some Hosting Tips so that everyone can have a great time!

- [Tips for Responsible Hosting](#)

Planning a social gathering? The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH and MADD) has created [a guide to help you plan ahead, prevent problems, reduce risks and still have a good time.](#)

Here are some tips to help lower your risks as a host:

- **When your guests arrive**, ask them how they plan to get home and encourage them not to drive if they drink. You can share ideas with them on how to get home safe or avoid driving (see list below) if they have not made a plan.
- As the host, **drink moderately or don't drink at all**. This way, your judgment will not be impaired.
- **As a responsible host**, take steps to prevent guests from becoming impaired. Sometimes, nudging them to drink less or more slowly is all that is needed. See below for some tips for being a responsible guest and how to drink less.
- **Offer low-alcohol and alcohol-free cocktails and other beverages**, like regular or sparkling water, fruit juices, tea and coffee. You can have a jug of ice water available where the other drinks are located and encourage your guests to stay well hydrated with non-alcoholic drinks.
- **Do not press your guest** to have an alcoholic drink when they decline and do not ask why they decline. See below for further tips on supporting someone not to drink.
- Serve low-salt foods throughout the duration of your gathering. This will decrease thirst and can help keep drinking in check.
- **Don't serve alcohol before planned physical activities**, like skiing, snowmobiling, or skating.
- Decide in advance how you will handle guests who have had too much to drink, i.e., offer them a place to stay for the night, pay for a cab ride, or find another safe way of getting them home. In some provinces, there might be volunteer drivers that offer safe ride services such as the [Operation Red Nose](#) in Quebec, New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. Operation Red Nose also has a mobile application you can download to see what is available in your area on the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#).
- **When preparing for your party**, you can assemble a "responsible host kit" which includes a toothbrush, toothpaste, mouthwash, shampoo, disposable razor, and comb/hairbrush for guests needing to stay overnight.
- Be aware of the applicable laws concerning **hosting a party**.

Learn more about responsible hosting from:

- [CAMH Having a party?](#)
- [Edu'alcool Hosting Know How](#)
- [MADD Canada Safe and Sober Driving Tips for Party-Goers and Party Hosts](#)

- [Operation Red Nose Take the Reins for Your Safety](#)

Tips for being a responsible guest:

1. Follow the [Low-Risk Drinking Alcohol Guidelines](#) (LRDG). Did you know that drinking more than four drinks on one occasion for women and more than five for men is considered binge drinking and is detrimental to your health? The science is evolving. We now know that even smaller quantities of any alcohol can be harmful to your health.
 - [Learn more regarding the LRDG 2022 Update](#)
2. Reduce drinking by following these tips:
 - Stick to the limits you've set for yourself.
 - Choose drinks with a lower percentage of alcohol (e.g. a beer with 5% alcohol content rather than 9%).
 - Drink slowly in small sips.
 - Always have a pitcher of water on hand.
 - For every drink of alcohol, have one non-alcoholic drink.
 - Try some alcohol-free cocktail recipes.
3. If you or others in your group plan to use a substance or drink alcohol, here are ways to get [home safely](#):
 - Having a designated driver.
 - Calling a friend or loved one.
 - Calling a cab or ride-share.
 - Taking Public Transit.

Tips to support someone who decides not to drink:

Just as there are many reasons people drink, there are many reasons people don't. This is a personal decision that falls into the "need to know" category. Asking why people choose not to drink can make your guests feel uncomfortable. For some guests this may lead them to drink or drink more than they want to rather than reveal their whys. It is important to remember your guest may simply not enjoy alcohol, may have problems with drinking, may be taking medication, may be trying to cut down for health reasons, have work the next day, or is the designated driver, among many other personal reasons.

If someone does not take you up on your offer to bring them a drink, do NOT ask them why they are not drinking. Instead, offer them a [festive mocktail](#) or another delicious healthy drink. Remember you are together to enjoy each other's company. Focus on that rather than on why someone is not drinking. Your conversations will be more lively and inclusive!

Cannabis or other substances:

- Parties and holiday get-togethers can also provide occasions where other substances could be consumed, such as cannabis or illegal substances. To learn more about how you as a host can help reduce potential harms associated with substance use, including how to respond to an overdose, read [Cannabis and Alcohol Use During the Holidays](#). Remember, an overdose is always an emergency. Always call 911 for help.

Additional Resources:

- MADD Canada: [Sobering Thoughts on Safe Partying: A Guide to Avoiding Legal Liability](#)
- [Operation Red Nose](#): mobile application you can download to see what is available in your area on the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#)
- CAMH: [Canada's Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines \[brochure\]](#)

Resources from the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction:

- [Knowing Your Limits with Alcohol: A Practical Guide to Assessing Your Drinking](#)
- [Coping With Stress, Anxiety, And Substance Use During Covid-19 \[infographic\]](#)
- [Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines \(LRDG\) \[brochure\]](#)
- [Knowing Your Limits with Cannabis: A Practical Guide to Assessing Your Cannabis Use](#)
- [Lower-Risk Gambling Guidelines](#)
- [Gambling Interactive Risk Assessment Tool](#)

Health Canada:

- [Opioid Overdose](#) - Signs, symptoms and how to respond

Try Giving a Healthy Holiday Nudge

Holidays and family get-togethers are often a time for sharing and gift-giving with the special people in our lives. Why not consider giving the people you care about at home or work a health nudge – a gift that truly says **“I care about you!”** Healthy Holiday Nudges usually cost nothing and can have a meaningful impact on the people who receive them.

The Healthy Holiday Nudge is based on something called “Nudge Theory” which states that giving people a gentle push in the right direction can help them to make positive changes to their behaviour, their choices and their quality of life. There is a growing body of research that shows this approach to promoting physical activity works. Here are two examples:

1. A study done by Stanford University’s Dr. Abby King, showed even small amounts of social support can produce **large and lasting changes in peoples’ levels of physical activity**. Her team showed interventions as simple as automated phone reminders and talking to fitness counsellors were very effective. They also showed this type of social support remained effective even when it was provided less frequently. With this in mind, try setting up a phone or calendar reminder to engage in physical activities, book yourself a series of virtual fitness sessions and contact your [local PSP office](#) or visit the CF Morale and Welfare Services [website](#) to access more resources this holiday season.
2. Dr. John Bellettiere from San Diego State University found stair use increased in response to something as simple as **posting signs nudging people to take the stairs** at the base of an airport staircase/escalator.

Are you up to the challenge of doing one Nudge a Day? The following are some examples of **“Holiday Exercise Nudges”** that you can use to help others be more physically active:

	At home	At work
Invite others for an outdoor walk	Take your family for a walk to see your neighbourhood’s festive decorations	Invite your colleagues for a walking meeting either in person or virtually. For a virtual walk meeting, did you know that TEAMS has a function that joins audio with a phone enabling one to move more freely?
Active transportation	Park farther away from the entrance of shopping malls or if you can, cycle or walk to the store or park farther away from the entrance	Put up a poster encouraging people to take the stairs and maybe even footprints on the floor leading to the stairwell
Nudge others by sharing your experience	Share what you do on social media or in conversations with others, letting them know why you do it, and invite them to nudge others	Send an email sharing your plan for physical activity and active living with your colleagues and invite them to nudge others

Watching you being physically active is a powerful motivator for others to do more. Here are other examples of activities that you can organize and nudge others to participate in:

- Organize a fun outdoor physical activity at least once a week during the holiday season;
- Put up a poster listing the benefits of exercise at your local hockey rink or in the break room;
- Use social media to send motivational quotes to family, friends and coworkers;

- Invite a friend to learn how to play pickle ball; or
- Encourage your staff to schedule exercise into their busy routines via text, emails or phone calls, or as an agenda item in meetings – it really works!

Bottom Line: **“Exercise nudges”** have been shown to be an effective strategy to help motivate people to take advantage of the benefits of physical activity. Gentle nudges in the right direction, at the right time, and from the right person can have lasting positive influences in your home, your workplace and your community. So this holiday season and throughout the year, give someone you care about a **Healthy Holiday Nudge** – they will love you for it! Exercise is medicine at any time of the year.



Happy Holidays!