

Holiday health and safety: another list to be checking twice

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An expert offers up tips for a busy season ahead

(HealthDay)—Flu shot, check. Hand soap, check. Window washer fluid, check.

Staying healthy and safe this [holiday season](#) requires adhering to a simple checklist, one expert says.

One way to avoid colds and flu is to wash your hands, said Dr. Sampson Davis, an emergency medicine doctor at St. Michael's Medical Center in Newark, N.J.

"Hand washing goes a tremendous way in preventing the spread of bacteria and viruses that live and thrive in the cold weather," Davis said in a news release. "I have escaped many sick days with a hand wash. It is the number one most important act to prevent contagious illnesses."

For those times when a sink isn't available, carry a small bottle of [hand sanitizer](#), he suggests. "Also, if sick, make sure to sneeze and cough into your arm right by your elbow. This too will help prevent the spread of germs," he said. "And lastly, make sure to visit your physician, employment health center or local pharmacy for your yearly flu shot."

Eating is a big part of the holidays, but you need to keep it under control. Overindulging can lead to weight gain and other health problems. You also need to be careful about your alcohol consumption. One trick is to have a glass of water between drinks, Davis said.

It's important to maintain your exercise routine over the holidays. Gaining a few ounces a day can add up to too many extra pounds by the end of the winter.

If you're planning a car trip, monitor the weather and avoid snow storms. Make sure your gas tank is full, check your tires, and top off all your engine fluids, including the window washer fluid. Be sure to have a fully charged cell phone in case you have an unexpected car problem and need to call for assistance, Davis advised.

You also need to manage your stress.

"The holiday season, job deadlines and daily duties can overload the hard drive," Davis added. "Shop early, plan ahead and manage your calendar as well as your friends and family expectations. You may not be able to attend every holiday party and that is okay."

During the winter, some people suffer a mood problem called [seasonal affective disorder](#) (SAD). If you believe you have the condition, see your doctor. There are effective treatments available, Davis added.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention has more [holiday health and safety tips](#).

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