

Survival tips for holiday road trips

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(HealthDay)—If you're among the millions of Americans planning to hit the highway over the Thanksgiving holiday, it's important to anticipate bumps in the road, according to a group dedicated to public education

and advocacy.

These travel issues can include [heavy traffic](#) and hungry children, as well as unexpected challenges, such as [bad weather](#) or an accident, researchers at *Consumer Reports* said in a news release.

When gearing up for a holiday road trip, the researchers advise taking the following steps to ensure a safe arrival at your destination:

- **Fill your tank.** It's important to fuel up before heading out. At the same time, check the fluid levels in your car as well as your tire pressure.
- **Prepare for the unexpected.** Be sure to pack an emergency kit with items that could help in the event of an accident or medical problem. This kit should contain: a flashlight, blanket, first-aid kit, a few basic tools, water and extra snacks.
- **Don't overdo it.** Every vehicle has a load capacity, which is the maximum amount of weight it can carry. Don't exceed this limit. The load capacity of most new cars is printed on a sticker inside the driver's door. Also important, make sure all luggage and gear are securely packed so it won't fall off the car or move around and hurt someone if you stop short.
- **Check the forecast.** Clear any snow or ice off your car before you leave. Allow extra space between your car and the other vehicles on the road, and reduce your speed, particularly during inclement weather.
- **Use a GPS system.** Using a navigation system will ensure you don't get lost. It also makes it easier to find a gas station or restaurant if the need arises. In addition, it can alert you to any accidents or traffic jams ahead and, in an emergency, it can help first responders find you.
- **Keep it kid-friendly.** If children are on board, pack plenty of snacks, water, games and videos or music to make the trip go

more smoothly.

- **Don't forget pet safety.** Pets should be secured with a crate or harness and seat belt while traveling in the car. Unsecured animals can distract a driver and create an additional hazard in the event of an accident. It's also important to bring water, food, a leash and clean-up supplies for pets.
- **Stay focused.** Never use a cellphone while you are driving. If you need to make a call or send a text, pull over or ask a passenger to do it for you.
- **Buckle up.** Always wear a seatbelt while driving or riding in a car. Children should be properly secured in a car seat in the back seat of the car until the age of 13.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about [holiday road safety](#).

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