

Don't let allergies spoil your holidays

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(HealthDay)—Asthma or allergies can put a damper on holiday gatherings. But there are ways you can stay healthy, the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology says.

"Everyone wants this time of year to be picture-perfect. But when there are runny noses, itchy eyes and sneezing involved, the picture is less than ideal. There are steps you can take to make your celebrations more fun and joy-filled for the whole family," said Dr. Janna Tuck, a college spokesperson.

Among Tuck's suggestions:

Sample holiday treats with caution because they may contain an ingredient that causes an allergic reaction. If you're going to parties, let the hosts know what foods you need to avoid, and bring some dishes you know are safe, she said in a college news release.

Always carry two epinephrine auto-injectors in case you do eat something with an ingredient that triggers an allergic reaction.

Consider hosting a gathering yourself so that you can control the food ingredients.

Watch out for smoke from fireplaces and candles, which can trigger an [asthma attack](#). Aerosols, such as [air fresheners](#) and artificial snow, as well as potpourri and other scents can irritate already inflamed airways and are best avoided.

If you're traveling for the holidays, be sure to pack all [asthma](#) or [allergy medications](#) for yourself and your family, including at least two epinephrine auto injectors for anyone who has been prescribed one.

Some hotels offer [allergy](#)-free rooms, so ask when making your reservation. If you're allergic to dust mites, pack your allergy-blocking bedding. Take medications well in advance if you know you'll be exposed to a dog or cat that makes your pet allergies flare.

Rinse off live trees before you bring them into the house. Some trees have mold spores and pollen on them, which can trigger nasal allergies. Also, Christmas trees can cause skin and eye irritation among people with contact skin allergies to a substance called terpene, which is found in sap.

Clean artificial trees and decorations that you use every year. They can accumulate dust and mold.

Remember that cold air can trigger asthma, so people with the respiratory condition should cover their mouth and nose with a scarf or face mask when it's very cold outside, especially if exercising.

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

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