



Happy Holidays!

# Holiday Season Wellness Kit

## Enjoying Yourself and Staying Well During the Holidays

The holiday season is a wonderful time of year, though it sometimes leaves us feeling overwhelmed. If things get too busy, we sometimes lose track of our overall health and wellness.

Here's a holiday season wellness kit for you—containing articles to help you stay healthy during the holiday and winter season. There are also some fun word games for you to try!



SECTION 1

# Reducing Stress





# Reducing Stress During the Holiday Season

---



The holiday season is a wonderful time of year. But it can also be a time when we feel the most pressured—there may be expectations about family togetherness, too many choices about how to spend your time, and concerns about spending too much money. With a little introspective thinking and planning, you can lessen the pressure and enjoy yourself. Here are some tips to help you reduce your stress during the holiday season.

- **Make a list.** Write down everything you'd like to do this holiday season, prioritize in order to get the most amount of joy from the limited amount of time you have to spend with family, friends, and coworkers. Remember, this year's priorities may look different than those of past holidays.
- **Edit your life.** You may need to be more assertive and say "no" to events that really don't add any meaning to the holiday season for you personally.
- **Clarify family expectations.** This may mean not giving a gift to every grown family member and rotating who will give a gift each year.
- **Lower your financial burden.** Budget your spending and stick to it. If you can get through the holidays without major debt afterwards, you can enjoy the season without the guilt.
- **Get organized ahead of time.** Get your gift wrapping or other chores done before the last minute. Then give yourself the gift of relaxation rather than stress.
- **Give to others.** Often we become so wrapped up in all the activities of the season, we forget to take the time to give to others outside the family—to those who really do have needs. Consider inviting an elderly widow or widower in your neighbourhood into your home for cocoa and cookies, "adopt" someone for the holidays who is either away from family or has no family, serve a meal at a local soup kitchen, or visit with some elderly folks at a nursing home and bring along some small gifts. These small acts may help bring perspective to your life and enrich it. Plus it may make you feel good!

## Reducing Stress During the Holiday Season

- **Remember that it's the thought that counts.** Don't let competitiveness and perfectionism send you on too many shopping trips. Homemade or thoughtful, inexpensive gifts from the heart are often cherished far more than high-priced items.
- **Take short relaxation breaks.** If you find yourself trying to sustain a fast pace, be sure to take some "down time," even if it is just taking a few minutes out to take a few deep breaths and consciously breathe away tension.
- **Take care of yourself.** For most people, the holidays go hand-in-hand with too much sugar, fat, caffeine, and alcohol and not nearly enough exercise or sleep. One of the best ways to combat stress is to pay attention to your body's need for healthy food, exercise, and sleep during this intense time of year.
- **Take time to laugh.** If you get too stressed, take a laughter break and do something like watch a funny holiday movie. Laughter is sometimes the best medicine, and watching other fictional families fumble their way through the holiday season can be entertaining and stress-releasing.

- **Create a new holiday tradition.** Take a fresh look at your various holiday activities. You may discover one or more traditions are in need of an overhaul, or you may consider creating a new tradition. Keep in mind that the best traditions are often those that are the simplest and involve spending quality time together.

Don't let the hustle and bustle of the season steal away opportunities to be thankful for the people, experiences, and events that will make this year unique and memorable. If you are sending greeting cards, why not add a personalized message about why you are thankful for having the recipient in your life. Consider getting involved with a volunteer activity where you can help others. Few activities result in greater satisfaction than the act of giving selflessly from the heart. Last, but not least, commit to taking some time to reflect on the deeper meaning and spirit of the holidays for you personally, for your family, and for humanity and the world.

By pausing to reflect on this meaning, you can gain a better perspective on how to organize your holiday plans and even your plans for the coming year.



### Make a change!

With the holiday season fast approaching, make a commitment to yourself to find a deeper satisfaction in the holiday experience. Don't just do things because you can do them and fit them into your schedule. Rather, consider if the event or activity fits in with your values and the meaning of the season. Remember, life is really about the journey. Savour the moments—allow yourself enough time to celebrate each activity before rushing on to the next event.

# Holiday Word Search

Y	T	R	A	P	D	Y	Q	T	I	N	Z	O	E	D
B	A	D	I	G	H	G	J	R	K	C	T	A	H	B
E	Y	B	F	T	K	J	R	A	D	W	W	U	Y	A
U	E	X	L	I	O	X	V	D	H	P	I	E	R	I
U	B	A	F	I	B	R	L	I	Z	P	X	P	E	H
E	E	H	E	H	N	E	K	T	O	F	X	A	L	K
H	S	S	H	L	P	X	O	I	B	R	H	O	C	U
R	Y	I	H	O	Y	N	U	O	V	G	R	N	T	S
I	H	P	C	S	L	B	X	N	D	G	A	O	U	T
T	G	X	N	R	A	I	Q	S	A	R	N	I	D	B
B	S	L	S	R	E	M	D	N	O	P	I	T	S	E
R	I	I	E	Q	W	X	I	A	O	I	O	A	U	D
S	J	L	L	O	Y	Z	E	V	Y	V	J	C	G	Z
T	A	B	N	R	E	T	H	G	U	A	L	A	A	A
X	J	S	S	D	C	O	O	K	I	E	S	V	R	Y

- |             |                |
|-------------|----------------|
| 1. COOKIES  | 8. ORGANIZED   |
| 2. DEBT     | 9. PARTY       |
| 3. EXERCISE | 10. RELAX      |
| 4. HEALTHY  | 11. SNOW       |
| 5. HOLIDAY  | 12. SUGAR      |
| 6. LAUGHTER | 13. TRADITIONS |
| 7. LIST     | 14. VACATION   |





SECTION 2

# Nutrition





---

## Section 2: Nutrition

# Getting Fit with the Holiday Challenge



**The holiday season is a wonderful time to bring friends and family together, and it's no surprise that food is often the focal point of these celebrations.**

From office parties to family gatherings, food has such a central role that it can leave us wondering if it's possible to partake in the festivities without tossing our health goals to the wind. But might we enjoy the holidays even more if we didn't anticipate the extra pounds that seem to invariably weigh us down by the New Year?

This holiday season we challenge you to celebrate good food, great company, and above all—your health! Here are our top five tips to get you started:

**Tip 1: Have a game plan.** Start your day with a balanced breakfast and some exercise. Remember, every bit counts. Before a party, have a light meal with lots of vegetables, like a turkey and vegetable soup or a healthy snack, like plain yogurt and a fresh fruit. At the event, stick to a 'Healthy Plate':  $\frac{1}{2}$  of your plate as vegetables,  $\frac{1}{4}$  as lean protein and  $\frac{1}{4}$  as complex starches.

**Tip 2: Reach for smaller plates.** If you want to decrease your portions, serve yourself on a smaller plate. You will have the impression that you're eating a full plate, but in reality your portions will automatically decrease. A study showed that participants who unknowingly ate from bottomless bowls ate 73% more soup than those who ate from normal bowls.

**Tip 3: Be choosy.** Do you dream of shortbread, but feel indifferent toward gravy? Before you choose your treats, ask yourself "Is this something I really enjoy eating?" If so, go for it and enjoy it! If not, skip it and indulge in something you really enjoy eating. In other words, be selective and make it count!

**Tip 4: Rethink your drink.** Decide on your drink limit beforehand and stick to it. For the drinks you do order, choose wisely; instead of 1 cup of egg nog (350 calories) choose 1 cup of apple cider (120 calories). Other great festive and hydrating options are non-alcoholic lower fat eggnogs, "virgin" Caesars, sparkling water and cranberry juice spritzers. Sipping these between alcoholic drinks can help you pace yourself and keep the drink calories in check.

**Tip 5: Listen to your hunger cues.** Eat slowly, and when you feel you've had enough, put away your plate. Be aware of the conditions that trigger you to overeat. If there's a buffet table, try to situate yourself away from the food, this way you'll be less likely to nibble.

**Take the Holiday Challenge! Get more ready-to-go, practical holiday tips and dodge the holiday weight gain by requesting a personalized consultation with your Homewood Health Registered Dietitian. For more information, contact your Employee & Family Assistance Program.**

# Nutrition Word Scramble

Please unscramble the words below.

1. teebleavg \_\_\_\_\_

2. plaet \_\_\_\_\_

3. brtheosrda \_\_\_\_\_

4. eogggn \_\_\_\_\_

5. utrfi \_\_\_\_\_

6. ckae \_\_\_\_\_

7. haeylht \_\_\_\_\_

8. nbilbe \_\_\_\_\_

9. ionsptro \_\_\_\_\_

10. uteyrk \_\_\_\_\_





SECTION 3

# Social Connections





---

## Section 3: Social Connections

# People Power: The Importance of Social Connections



**While winter can be fun for many people, it can mean social isolation for others. The bad weather makes it difficult for some people to get around. And weeks of dreary weather can make a lot of us less interested in going out and more likely to stay at home in front of the TV.**

But while it can be a challenge to stay connected to friends and acquaintances during the cold weather months, it is vital for our physical and mental health that we do. Our social networks help us maintain a positive outlook and a positive outlook boosts our immune system and reduces the effects of stress. Just what the doctor ordered during cold and flu season.

### **Friends are good for our health**

Friends help us celebrate good times and provide support during bad times. They advise, support, counsel, console, encourage and help. They enrich our lives by:

- nurturing our sense of belonging and purpose;
- increasing our well-being and helping us reduce our stress;

- boosting our self-confidence and feelings of self-worth;
- supporting us when we're faced with serious life events such as divorce, serious illness, job loss or the death of a loved one;
- encouraging us to stay healthy and to address unhealthy behaviours such as smoking, excessive drinking or lack of exercise; and
- inspiring us to set goals and reach for our dreams.

We need friends because we humans are social creatures. Psychologists and doctors have repeatedly found that there are serious—even life-threatening—consequences when we don't have enough social contact. We can't stay on track mentally and we are compromised physically.

---

## People Power: The Importance of Social Connections

### Out and about

With our busy professional and personal lives, many of us find it hard to develop new friendships or even maintain existing friendships. They often take a back seat to other priorities, such as work, spouses, children and taking care of our homes. We find we've grown apart from the friends of our youth and haven't yet found a way to meet new people.

We don't necessarily need dozens of friends. We just need a few people we can depend on and who depend on us in return. Although developing and maintaining good friendships takes effort, the benefits are worth the investment of our time and energy.

Not sure where to begin? Try the following:

- **Take classes** where you'll meet like-minded people—yoga, art appreciation, music or crafts.
- **Attend community events.** Join people working toward a goal you believe in, such as an election or the cleanup of a natural area. Find a group with similar interests in an activity, such as auto racing or gardening.
- **Get involved with a winter sport.** If hockey or downhill skiing is not an option, consider curling or cross country skiing.
- **Volunteer.** Offer your time and talents at a hospital, place of worship, museum, community centre, charity or other organization. You can form strong connections when you work with people who have mutual interests.
- **Join or get more involved in a faith community.** Take advantage of activities and get-to-know-you events for new members.
- **Extend and accept invitations.** When you're invited to a social gathering, say yes. Contact someone who recently invited you to an activity and return the favour.

- **Go for a walk.** Grab your kids or dog and head outside. Chat with neighbours who are also out and about or head to a popular park and strike up conversations there.
- **Invite people over** for regular games or TV nights.

Don't limit yourself to one strategy for meeting people. The wider you spread your net, the greater your likelihood of success.

### Go surfing

Email and Skype have made staying connected with far-flung family and friends as easy as tapping a finger and Facebook allows us to find old friends as well as people with similar interests. The Internet can be a wonderful tool for those in danger of social isolation—the elderly, the disabled, the shy and those in a new community.

Online friends can be a great support if they are an addition to our social circle and not the main focus. Online friends can't look you in the eye, give you a hug or just sit and listen. But they are there for those of us who're not comfortable sharing certain concerns with friends and family and can be a support during the rough times in life. There are hundreds of specialized groups whose members share similar experiences—divorce, a health issue, job loss etc.—and can provide empathy, information and valuable advice.

When you're going through a particularly difficult time, you may feel you're taking up too much of your best friend's time. But the online community is always there, day or night, and that can give you the emotional boost you need.

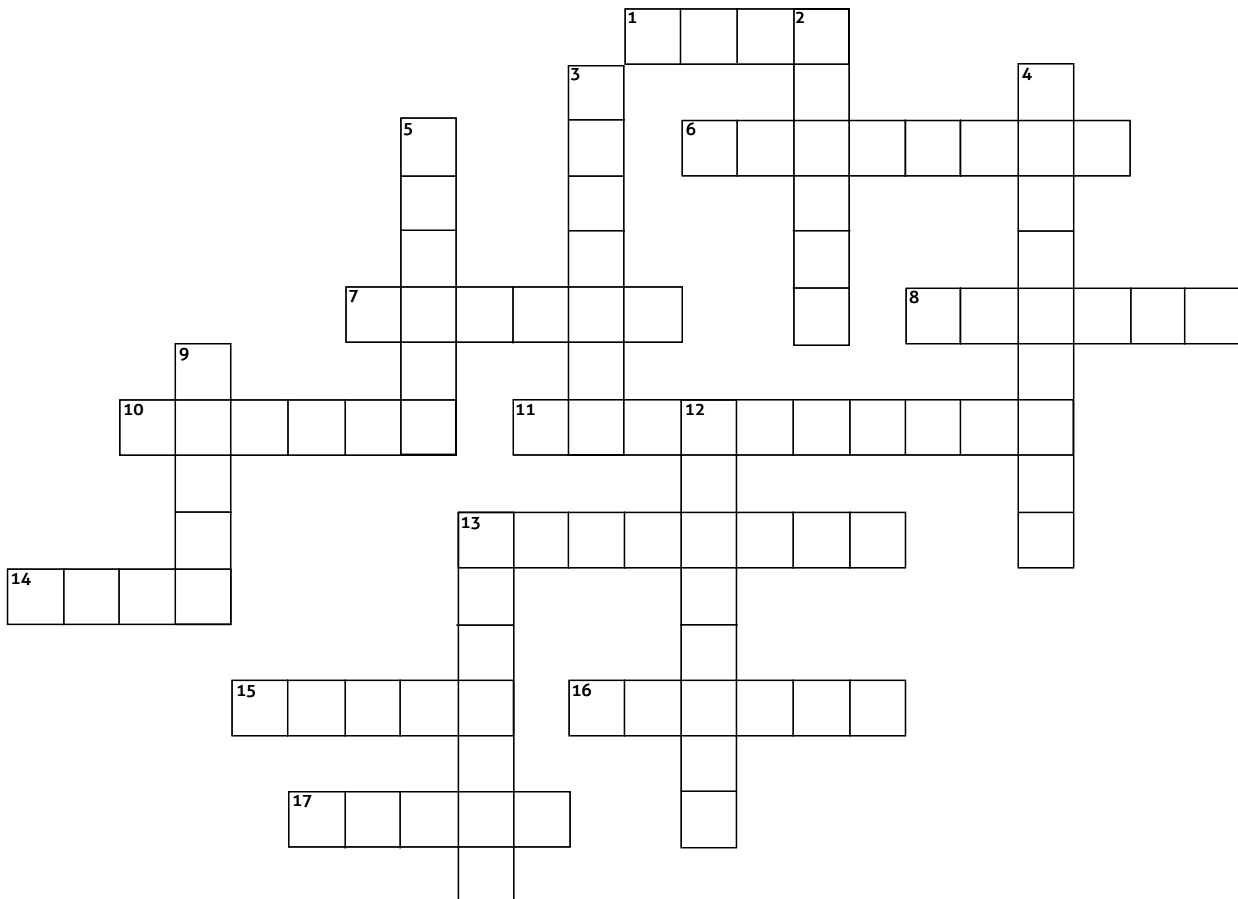
### A friend indeed

The need for comradeship is part of our makeup. Feeling accepted, appreciated, and needed by those who know us well—and like us anyway—is essential for our mental and physical well-being. If you feel you need a little help, contact your Employee and Family Assistance Program.



# Social Connections Crossword!

Complete the crossword below.



## Across

1. Opposite of hot
6. Popular social media
7. Popular winter sport
8. Means cold and snow
10. Some say this is the most important thing
11. Another word for help
13. Our social networks help us stay
14. Help us feel loved and not alone
15. Being with others give us a
16. Try to avoid being this over the holidays
17. Friends and partners make us feel

## Down

2. Visit if you're not feeling well
3. Support us during bad times
4. Giving your time
5. Canada's "game"
9. Invite someone over to play
12. Helps us stay connected
13. Gatherings of friends



SECTION 4

# Answer Key



## Section 4: Answer Key

### Holiday Word Search Answers

Y	T	R	A	P	D	Y	Q	T	I	N	Z	O	E	D
B	A	D	I	G	H	G	J	R	K	C	T	A	H	B
E	Y	B	F	T	K	J	R	A	D	W	W	U	Y	A
U	E	X	L	I	O	X	V	D	H	P	I	E	R	I
U	B	A	F	I	B	R	L	I	Z	P	X	P	E	H
E	E	H	E	H	N	E	K	T	O	F	X	A	L	K
H	S	S	H	L	P	X	O	I	B	R	H	O	C	U
R	Y	I	H	O	Y	N	U	O	V	G	R	N	T	S
I	H	P	C	S	L	B	X	N	D	G	A	O	U	T
T	G	X	N	R	A	I	Q	S	A	R	N	I	D	B
B	S	L	S	R	E	M	D	N	O	P	I	T	S	E
R	I	I	E	Q	W	X	I	A	O	I	O	A	U	D
S	J	L	L	O	Y	Z	E	V	Y	V	J	C	G	Z
T	A	B	N	R	E	T	H	G	U	A	L	A	A	A
X	J	S	S	D	C	O	O	K	I	E	S	V	R	Y

### Social Connections Crossword Answers



### Nutrition Word Scramble Answers

- teebleavg vegetable
- plaet plate
- brtheosrda shortbread
- eoggn eggnog
- utrft fruit
- ckae cake
- haeylht healthy
- nbilbe nibble
- ionsptro portions
- uteyrk turkey



## About Homewood Health

---

Homewood Health offers the highest quality of clinical support and intervention available within the EFAP industry, and an unmatched continuum of services — spanning health promotion, mental health and addictions support, and prevention-focused work-life balance services.

## Contact Us

---

For more information on Homewood's Employee and Family Assistance Plan offering, please contact your Manulife representative.

