



Parenting Tips: Holiday Safety & Health Tips

Halloween Safety

- Supervise your children at all times.
- If you are trick-or-treating, select an area that you are familiar with and that is well-lighted. Go in a group, with several parents.
- Stay away from chaotic, unknown, dark, or potentially dangerous areas.
- Select costumes that are light colored and do not drag on the floor.
- Utilize glow sticks or light-reflecting items in the dark, to make you and your children more visible.
- Use make-up instead of masks with costumes.
- While trick-or-treating, do not enter the home of anyone you do not know.
- Make sure all treats are wrapped and sealed.
- Inspect all the treats before allowing your children to eat them.

Toy Safety

- Select toys to suit your child's age, abilities, skills, and interest level.
- For infants, avoid toys with small parts.
- For children ages 8 and under, avoid toys with sharp edges or corners.
- Supervise young children when utilizing pull toys.
- Select toys that are battery-operated instead of toys that have electric cables and require electricity.
- Remove strings and ribbons from toys before giving them to young children.
- Before giving a child a new toy, read the instructions and become familiar with how the toy works.
- Immediately dispose of any plastic or other material in which toys are packaged. Small children may put these materials in their mouths and choke. Also immediately dispose of or put away any wrapping paper, ribbons, etc.

Staying Healthy

- The holidays can be a busy time – staying healthy is more important than ever to keep you and your family going and allow you to enjoy the season!
- Prepare healthy, low-calorie meals. Modify recipes to reduce fat and calories.
- Prepare healthy lunches for your family.
- Make sure you and your children eat a healthy breakfast every day.

- Prepare meals with plenty of vegetables instead of carbohydrates.
- Fully cook meats and poultry.
- Rinse vegetables and fruits before serving or cooking them.
- Choose water, diet soda (in limited quantities), or low-calorie drinks instead of sodas. Limit juice, which can have high calorie and sugar content. Drink plenty of water. Keep your children well-hydrated.
- Foods that require refrigeration should never be left at room temperature for more than two hours.
- Give children (and yourself) a light, healthy snack before engaging in an activity or heading out of the house.
- When bringing a dish to a party, choose a low-fat, healthy one. That way, you and your family will have at least one healthy option to choose from. (Other guests will probably appreciate this too!)
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly and make sure your children do the same. Make sure hands are washed before eating.
- Many holiday occasions can involve alcoholic beverages. Limit your consumption of alcohol, especially when you need to supervise and be alert for your children, or when you are going to be driving later.
- The holiday season is full of tempting treats. Allow yourself and your children to enjoy these treats in moderation. If the majority of your family's diet is made up of healthy meals and snacks, it's okay to enjoy holiday treats in small portions.

Traveling by Car

- Prepare children for the trip by telling them where you're going, how long you'll be on the road, and so forth. Children can also help choose and pack their clothing and other items to take, under parental supervision.
- Prepare your travel routes ahead of time and check weather conditions.
- Provide yourself with extra time for traffic, weather, and other delays.
- Do not drink and drive.
- Utilize safety belts and child seats that are appropriate for your child's age, height, and weight. For more information on child care seats and Texas Public Law, please visit:
ftp://ftp.dot.state.tx.us/pub/txdotinfo/trf/child_safety/info_card_eng_091109.pdf
- Inspect your car before traveling (tires, oil, gas, water, glass cleaners, etc.).
- Carry identification for all those who are traveling.
- Carry the name, address, and telephone number of your car insurance company, health insurance if you have it, and doctors.
- Pack clothes that are appropriate for the weather.
- Pack a safety kit with flares, flash lights, batteries, and tools.
- Bring along over-the-counter pain medication (for children and adults), a first aid kit, sunscreen, insect repellent, and wet wipes or hand sanitizer.
- Have your mobile phone fully charged. Don't forget to bring the charger along, and bring a car charger if you have one.
- Take plenty of breaks during a long drive. This will help keep children from getting uncomfortable and stressed.

- Bring a few toys and activities that children can safely use in the car. Also bring some healthy snacks and some water to drink.
- Long car trips provide a great opportunity for family activities. You and your children can sing songs and play games. The following are a few ideas for games:
 - Starting with the first letter of the alphabet, look for words that start with or contain each letter. Look on road signs, billboards, and license plates.
 - Play “I Spy.”
 - Take turns picking something that everyone will look for out the window (for example, a purple car; a car with a dog in it; a license plate from your home state; etc.).
 - Look for interesting-shaped clouds and make up stories about them.
 - Be creative and safe!

Traveling by Air

- Prepare children for the trip by explaining what the process will be, how long it will take, etc. Children can also help choose and pack their clothing and other items to take, under parental supervision.
- Arrive at the airport early and provide enough time for long security lines.
- Call your airline to learn about the rules of travel, arrival times, inspection of luggage, food, liquids, etc..
- If you are unsure whether you can take an item, leave it at home.
- Wear comfortable shoes that you can easily remove in the inspection area.
- Pack your bags in an orderly manner. Organize your luggage by packing layers. Don’t pack bags too full – they’ll be uncomfortably heavy, and you may be charged for bags above a certain weight limit. Check with your airline about luggage weight restrictions.
- Think before you act: aggressive behavior, jokes, and threats will not be tolerated in an airport or on a plane and may bring negative results such as missing your flight or being arrested.
- Have boarding pass, passport and/or other identification for all those who are traveling.
- In your carry-on luggage, pack a few light items which children can play with on the plane. Ideas include books, crayons, coloring paper, a favorite toy, etc. Also include a few healthy snacks – what you bring from home is likely to be healthier and less expensive than what you can buy in the airport or onboard the plane.
- Utilize airport waiting time and time during flights to enjoy time with your kids. You can play family games such as those mentioned above under “Traveling by Car.”

Other Tips for the Holidays

- The holiday season is often full of fun activities. Allow your children to enjoy these activities, but make sure they have some “down time” and get plenty of rest too. Overscheduled days mean cranky children – and cranky parents!
- The holidays can be a great time to establish a family tradition or two – anything that is fun and meaningful for your family!

- If you wish, find a way for your family to share with others during the holiday season – perhaps by volunteering at a local organization, preparing a meal for a neighbor who could use it, or choosing some gifts for a family that can use them (many agencies have “adopt a family” or “adopt a child” projects during the holidays). Finding a way to give as a family can be a great family tradition and also teaches your children about the value of sharing and kindness.
- It’s easy to feel overwhelmed during the holidays. Make sure to take some time for yourself.
- You may feel financially overwhelmed by the pressure to spend during the holidays. Set a budget and stick to it. Remember – the most important thing is not how much you spend or what you buy, but the quality time you spend with your loved ones.