

## December Health Tip 2019 – Managing the Holidays

### Mental Stress - Depression

Another holiday season is upon us! This time of year is filled with family gatherings, social outings, parties, and various celebrations. For many however, the holidays are not filled with cheer but rather bring about “the blues”, sadness and even depression. Some people experience family tension, financial problems and feelings of grief and loss which can make this a very stressful time. Excessive spending and shopping can lead to feeling overwhelmed and fatigued. Additionally, those who suffer from clinical depression or other mental health challenges may have more symptoms during the holidays. During this season, self-care is so important along with setting realistic expectations, and remembering the true meaning of the holiday season.



### Some signs of Holiday Stress include:

- Headaches
- Excessive drinking
- Overeating
- Poor sleep
- Irritability
- Loneliness



Tedra Anderson-Brown, MD  
Behavioral Health Medical Director with BCBSNC

Dr. Tedra Anderson-Brown says, “It is very important to note that depression is a treatable illness, and not a sign of personal weakness or a character flaw. It is estimated that 1 in 5 Americans will experience depression in their lifetime. Many who have depression, do not seek treatment especially in communities of color.”

### Some Symptoms of Depression include:

- Feeling sad, irritable, anxious or empty
- Feeling hopeless or experiencing guilt
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities
- Feeling tired or not having energy
- Poor concentration
- Changes in sleep such as sleeping too much or too little
- Overeating or loss of appetite
- Aches or pains, headaches or digestive problems
- Thoughts of suicide and/or making attempts to harm oneself.

### Tips to Manage Holiday Stress and Depression:

- Practice healthy habits: get proper sleep, eat right, exercise and limit alcohol intake
- Treat yourself to **MUSE**, the latest digital meditation device and learn how to practice meditation.
- Avoid overbooking yourself
- Create a budget and stick to it; find inexpensive/free ways to enjoy yourself

Seek professional  
**HELP**  
if 5 or more of the  
symptoms listed are  
experienced every day  
for at least 2 weeks or if  
you have any thoughts  
of death or suicide.

- Take time to think, reflect and pamper yourself
- Volunteer and help someone else
- Create new holiday traditions and memories
- Seek support from family and friends
- Get professional help if needed

### Substance Addiction

Dr. Carol Gibbs comments, “People struggling with substance addiction can find it even more challenging to deal with during the holiday season. December is considered one of the deadliest months for drunk driving accidents. The exposure to temptations is often increased with holiday celebrations and more opportunities to socialize, which can be a trigger for many people.”



Carol Gibbs, MD  
Managing Partner of Senior Health  
and Education Partners, PLLC

### A Few Facts About Substance Use:

- One of every eight Americans has a significant problem with alcohol or drugs, with 40% of the group having a “dual diagnosis” (both mental/nervous disorder).
- Opioid addiction is the leading cause of drug overdose in the United States.
- Alcoholism is the third leading cause of death in the U.S. today.
- Continued use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs can also result in irreversible damage to the brain, liver, kidneys, heart and other organs.

### Tips to Help You During This Holiday Season:

- **Plan. Plan. Plan. If you are already dealing with an addiction, schedule meetings and make sure you have support people in place to hold you accountable.**
- **Limit your time at celebrations. Consider bringing a non-alcoholic drink with you.**
- **Limit your media exposure. Ads for alcohol and E-Cigarettes (VAPES) tend to be more frequent during the holiday season.**

### Remember Your ABC's:

Always exercise regularly as this may help to minimize stress.

Be willing to seek professional help.

Control your stress and anxiety by talking to someone, breathing deeply, laughing, and meditating.

### Seek Professional Help:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) or 911
- For Mobile Crisis Team available 24 hrs./day, Freedom House Recovery Center at 919-797-1865
- For Walk-in Crisis Center - Daily. Visit 309 Crutchfield St., Durham, NC 27704 – 919-560-7305

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