

Managing the Holidays When You Have Cancer

This handout offers information how to manage the holidays. You may have a long list of things you want to do during the holidays.

You may feel:

- You don't have enough time to do everything on your list.
- Tired.
- Unsure of how you will get through the holiday season.

You are not alone! Everyone has stress in their lives. It can help to stop stress before it starts. This is not always possible. You may find it helpful to do things that make you feel relaxed. This can help you reduce your stress during the holidays.

What you can do to help yourself



Make lists

You may find it hard to:

- Know what to do first when you have a lot to do.
- Remember all you need to do.

It can be helpful to make a list of the things you have to do, want to do and feel you should do. This allows you to decide what things you will do and when to do them. You may choose not to do some of the things on your list. Make a list of the gifts you need to buy before you go shopping.



Helpful reminders

Leave reminder notes of things you need to do where you are sure to see it.



Ask for help

You do not have to do everything. Ask others to help. Example: suggest having a pot-luck holiday dinner. This allows others to help with the meal.



Take a break

Take a 2 to 10 minute break every hour of the day. This will increase your energy and lower your stress level. Use this time to do some stretches, breathing exercises or go for a walk.



Make back up plans

You may not be able to do all the things you planned. Your plans may have to change. It can help to make back-up plans in advance.



Enjoy the moment

Do not focus on what 'might' happen in the future. Think about and enjoy what you are doing now.



Write down your thoughts and feelings

Write down your thoughts and feelings in a notebook or journal. This can help you let your feelings out. It can also help you look at problems in a different way.



Plan time to care for yourself

Plan to do things you enjoy doing.



Talk to someone about your worries

It may help to talk to a friend or a counsellor. Talking about your worries or concerns with someone can help you decide how to help yourself.



Think positive thoughts

Think positive thoughts. This can help to reduce your stress level, help you feel calm and manage stressful situations. You can become more stressed when you think negative thoughts.



Distract yourself

Distract yourself with thoughts and activities you enjoy. This can help reduce your stress level.



Relaxation exercises

Do relaxation or breathing exercises. They can help you feel calm, relaxed and reduce your stress level.

The Canadian Cancer Society offers '[holiday coping tips from individuals affected by cancer](#)'. Go to cancer.ca and search 'holiday coping'.

This handout was created by the Patient Education Program at the Durham Regional Cancer Centre/Lakeridge Health. It was last reviewed in October of 2024.