

December 2026

# Wellness NEWSLETTER

**HEALTH OBSERVANCE**

## National Impaired Driving Prevention Month

*Caitlyn Keenen*

The holidays are a time to celebrate and connect with loved ones. It's important to enjoy this time and really de-stress, but it is also vital to stay safe. With the uptick in social gatherings during the holiday season, travel rises, and so does the use of alcohol and drugs. For these reasons, the President has designated every December as National Impaired Driving Prevention Month. During this month, we aim to raise awareness about the dangers of operating a vehicle while under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.

Alcohol/drug-impaired fatalities increase significantly during the holiday season, with New Year's Eve/Day cited as the single deadliest day of the year for drunk driving. However, these tragic accidents are 100% avoidable. While law enforcement has implemented campaigns such as, "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over" and "If You Feel Different, You Drive Different – Drive High, Get a DUI", we still must take personal responsibility to make sure ourselves and our loved ones are avoiding these preventable tragedies.

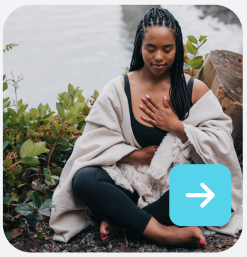
Below are some actions you can take to help save lives.

- **Plan Ahead:** Before attending a holiday celebration, arrange a ride home.
- **Know the Signs:** Impairment goes beyond alcohol. Anyone who has consumed mind-altering substances should not drive.
- **Speak Up:** If you see someone who is impaired attempting to drive, take their keys and help them find a ride.
- **Volunteer to Stay Sober:** When attending an event, volunteer to stay sober and be the designated driver to ensure everyone gets home safely.
- **Host Mindfully:** If you are hosting a gathering, offer non-alcoholic options and confirm your guests are safe to drive home.

Remember, your decision to drive sober and verify that those around you do the same this holiday season is the most important choice you can make to ensure everyone arrives home safely.

***Source:***
*https://www.scm-safety.com/national-impaired-driving-prevention-month/*





**2 MINDFUL MOMENTS:**

Staying Grounded During the Holiday Rush

**Simple ways to slow down and stay present, one moment at a time.**



**3 HOLIDAY WELLBEING**

Managing Loneliness, Grief, or Stress During the Holidays



**4** Featured Recipe

CONNECTEDNESS

# HEALTH TIP CORNER



## Mindful Moments: Staying Grounded During the Holiday Rush

*Katherine Kline*

December moves fast. Between gatherings, gift lists, and year-end deadlines, it's easy to spend the whole month a few steps ahead of yourself.

Mindfulness brings you back to the present. It means paying attention to what's happening right now, without judging it. Research suggests it may help ease anxiety and support better sleep.

The good news? You don't need a quiet room or a free hour. A few mindful minutes fit right into the day you already have.

**Quick Tip: Try the 5-4-3-2-1 Reset**
Name 5 things you see, 4 you can touch, 3 you hear, 2 you smell, and 1 you taste. It's a quick way to bring your focus back to the here and now.

**When you wake up**
Before you reach for your phone, take three slow breaths and notice how your body feels. Set one simple intention, like "I'll take it one thing at a time."

**When the day gets busy**
Waiting in line or sitting in traffic? Use it as a pause. Relax your shoulders and breathe in for four counts and out for six.

**When you're with others**
Put your phone away during meals and gatherings. Listen fully and notice the small moments you'll want to remember.

**When the day winds down**
Write down one thing that went well today. A few minutes of reflection helps your mind settle before sleep.

*Source:* *https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/tips/8-things-to-know-about-meditation-and-mindfulness*



# Managing Loneliness, Grief, or Stress During the Holidays

*Wellworks For You*

The holidays are often described as the most joyful time of year, but for many people, they bring mixed emotions. Busy calendars, family dynamics, and holiday spending can add stress, and the season can make missing a loved one feel especially close. If this time of year feels heavy, you're not alone, and there are simple ways to care for yourself through it.

**Why can the holidays feel harder?**

The season comes with high expectations. When real life doesn't match the picture of a perfect gathering, it's easy to feel like you're falling short. For anyone missing someone, traditions and familiar moments can bring grief to the surface, especially during a first holiday season after a loss. Shorter days and changes to routine can affect mood and energy, too.

Whatever you're feeling is valid. Joy and sadness can exist side by side, and making room for both is part of taking care of yourself. It's also okay to do things differently this year, whether that means starting a new tradition, keeping plans small, or honoring a loved one in a way that feels right to you.

How can you protect your wellbeing this season? Below are some simple ways to ease stress and stay connected.

- Let go of the idea of a perfect holiday
- Say yes to what matters most and no to what drains you
- Set a holiday budget and stick to it
- Reach out to a friend with a quick call or text
- Honor a loved one with a favorite recipe or tradition
- Get outside for fresh air and daylight
- Keep up with sleep, movement, and balanced meals
- Join a community event or volunteer
- Lean on a counselor or wellness resources if feelings linger

If you or someone you know needs support, call or text 988 anytime for free, confidential help.

***Source:***
*https://www.psychiatry.org/news-room/apa-blogs/seven-ways-to-cope-with-holiday-stress*



FEATURED RECIPE

# Festive Cranberry Mocktail

4 - SERVINGS | 5 MINUTES *Alcohol-free*

## INGREDIENTS

**For the Mint Simple Syrup:**

- **1 cup water**
- **1 cup sugar**
- **1 cup fresh mint leaves**

**For a Pitcher (6 Servings):**

- **Ice (at least 2-3 cups)**
- **6 oz. mint simple syrup (3/4 cup)**
- **12 oz. fresh lime juice 1 1/2 cups)**
- **24 oz. cranberry juice (3 cups)**
- **12-24 oz. sparkling water/soda water (1 1/2-3 cups)**

**For ONE Mocktail:**

- **Ice**
- **1 oz. mint simple syrup**
- **2 oz. fresh lime juice**
- **4 oz. cranberry juice**
- **2-4 oz. sparkling water/soda water**
- **Optional garnishes: lime slices fresh mint leaves, fresh cranberries or sugared cranberries, rosemary sprigs**

## DIRECTIONS

Make the Mint Simple Syrup

1. Combine sugar and water in a saucepan. Stir over medium heat until the sugar dissolves, then turn off the heat and add fresh mint leaves.
2. Steep the mint for at least 30 minutes up to 2 hours, then cool to room temperature.
3. Strain the syrup through a fine-mesh sieve and store it in a glass jar.
4. Mint syrup will keep several weeks in the fridge and can be made in advance.

Make Your Mocktail

1. Fill a glass with ice.
2. Build your drink. Pour in mint simple syrup, fresh lime juice, cranberry juice, and 1/4-1/2 cup sparkling water to fill the glass.
3. Gently stir to combine, then top with your favorite garnishes.

For a Pitcher Of Drinks

1. Add at least 2-3 cups of ice to a large pitcher. Pour in simple syrup, lime juice, and cranberry juice. Stir to combine, then top with sparkling water and garnishes right before serving.

## NUTRITION

| Per Serving: | | Per Serving: | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Calories:** | 145 | **Sugar:** | 33g |
| **Carbs:** | 38g | | |

***Source:*** *https://sweetsandthankyou.com/cranberry-lime-mocktail/*