



Holiday Safety

Holidays mean joining family and friends for fellowship, food, and cheer. But these joyful celebrations can also present some common hazards that include drunk driving, food-borne illnesses, and kitchen dangers. Thankfully, these are all preventable hazards, so it's easy to keep your holidays joyful and free of tragedy.

During the holidays, many of us attend and/or host special events and parties. These events often involve celebrating with alcohol. Unfortunately, many people still make the bad decision to drive home either tipsy or downright drunk. Driving after drinking is never the smart or safe choice. During the 2016 holiday season in Missouri (Thanksgiving to New Year's Day), there were 880 crashes, resulting in 294 injuries, 18 deaths, and 274 DUI/DWI arrests made.

Never get behind the wheel of any vehicle if you have been drinking. If you're going to drink at an event, plan ahead and have a designated driver who will not drink and can ensure that everyone gets home safely. Ask for a ride home from a friend, or call a cab or an Uber. If you are driving during the holiday season, keep an eye out for drunk drivers – the car drifting to one side, then jerking back into their lane, driving erratically, variation in speed, etc. If you think you see a drunk driver, maintain a safe distance and avoid getting in front of that vehicle.

Food is an important part of holiday festivities, so it's important to **keep a close eye on food safety when it comes to holiday health.** Keep all food preparation surfaces clean. Wash your hands with soap and warm water before and after preparing food. Remember that meat, poultry, and fish dishes can spoil if left out on a counter. Make sure all food is fully cooked. Cover leftovers promptly and get them into the refrigerator right away. Check your pantry and refrigerator for expired food and condiments. Dispose of expired food immediately. Keep in mind that infants, young children, older adults, and pregnant women are at a higher risk for severe food-borne illnesses if food is not prepared properly.

Cooking favorite foods for a holiday meal can be fun for you and/or your spouse. But it can be stressful and slightly overwhelming at times; **be sure to make kitchen safety a main ingredient in your holiday meals.** Young children might be interested in "helping" in the kitchen. It's best to give them a safe place to watch you work and have them do small tasks, such as making place cards for the table. Always cook with pot handles turned inward on the stovetop to reduce the chances of spilling hot food on people or kitchen surfaces. Roll up your sleeves and wear an apron to reduce the chances of catching your clothes on fire. Use potholders when carrying hot food. When



cutting or carving, remember to cut away from your body. Always put knives into the dishwasher with the blades and points downward.

SAFETY REMINDER

Take a break and enjoy the holidays! But always make safety a priority whether you're celebrating at work, at home, or on vacation.