



December is Safe Toys and Gifts Awareness Month

When it comes to toys and gifts, the excitement and desire to get your children their favorite toys may cause shoppers to forget about safety factors associated with them. Before you make these purchases, it is critical to remember to consider the safety and age range of the toys.

This holiday season (and beyond), please consider the following guidelines for choosing safe toys for all ages:

- Inspect all toys before purchasing. Avoid those that shoot or include parts that fly off. The toy should have no sharp edges or points and should be sturdy enough to withstand impact without breaking, being crushed, or being pulled apart easily.
- Be diligent about inspecting toys your child has received. Check them for age, skill level, and developmental appropriateness before allowing them to be played with.
- Look for labels that assure you the toys have passed a safety inspection – “ATSM” means the toy has met the American Society for Testing and Materials standards.
- Gifts of sports equipment should always be accompanied by protective gear (give a helmet with the skateboard)
- Do **NOT** give toys with small parts (including magnets and “button” batteries which can cause serious injury or death if ingested) to young children as they tend to put things in their mouths, increasing the risk of choking. If the piece can fit inside a toilet paper roll, it is not appropriate for kids under age three.
- Do **NOT** give toys with ropes and cords or heating elements.
- Do **NOT** give crayons and markers unless they are labeled “nontoxic”.



How to Avoid Post-Holiday Eating Drowsiness

The holidays are a time to celebrate with family, friends and food. But after consuming turkey, sides and desserts, we are often tired and ready for our holiday nap. Dr. Jacob Mey, assistant professor at Pennington Biomedical, provides some tips to avoid drowsiness after celebrating your holiday meals.

“Tryptophan is an essential amino acid. It's in the majority of protein foods you eat,” Mey said. “One of the things your body uses tryptophan for is creating melatonin and serotonin, two agents that promote sleepiness so that's why turkey gets the bad rap. But tryptophan is in a lot of other protein foods as well, like tuna or chicken or even steak. And those foods don't get the same bad rap that turkey does.”

Besides tryptophan, other things can cause that holiday drowsiness. Mey said, “When you eat a lot of foods, especially large volumes of carbohydrates like we have in our sweet potatoes or our stuffing – and certainly all of our desserts – that causes a large increase in blood sugar. And then, what does your body do when it sees that? It releases insulin, and then you have a fast decrease in blood sugar, and that can cause sleepiness.”

To avoid sleepiness after eating your holiday meal, consider going for a brief walk to reduce the post-meal glucose or blood sugar spike, and that can with your energy levels afterwards as well.

“One of the things you can do is practice eating mindfully, or just slow down your eating habits,” Mey said. “A great, simple way to do this is to put down your fork between every bite and have a conversation with all the wonderful friends and family that you have at your dinner table.”



Live Better Louisiana

The 2024 Wellness campaign has come to a close. We thank everyone who has participated in the Live Better Louisiana program. Catapult is currently scheduling clinics for the 2025 wellness credit. We will share those dates as we get them. Additionally, there is a new Primary Care Provider form for the 2025 wellness credit. You can access that form on the OGB website by clicking [here](#).

Healthy Holiday Eating

Eating right can be particularly challenging during the holiday season – lots of celebrations are centered around food, people bring food to work and homes as gifts, and we get lots of special treats and family recipes that are only made once a year.

In this video (3:00), Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Dietitian Laura Vidrine gives tips to enjoy these holiday celebrations by eating mindfully so you don't overdo it.



Louisiana Marathon – 2023

- When:** January 13-14, 2024
Where: The State Capitol
Downtown Baton Rouge, LA
Times: Saturday: 8 am – 5k and Quarter Marathon
10 am – Kids Marathon
Sunday: 7 am – Full and Half Marathon

Louisiana is well known for its festivals, where we celebrate with food, music and dancing. The Louisiana Marathon adds running to that mix for a truly unforgettable weekend. Come run a fast, flat, and fun race course with runners from 50 states and over 36 countries. Then enjoy a true Louisiana Festival featuring local musicians and some of the best southern cuisine around. Participants can choose from a full, half, a quarter marathon, a 5K, and kid's marathon, click [here](#) to register.

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana members can receive a 25% discount by entering BCBSLA25OFF when registering.



Healthy Year-end Reminders

As this year comes to a close, it's the perfect time to review and make sure you are up-to-date on important screenings that will keep you healthy. Some of those screenings include:

- **Mammogram** – Women over 40 should get a mammogram screening each year.
- **Colonoscopy** – Recommended for both men and women every 10 years, starting at age 50. If you have a family history of colon cancer, your doctor may recommend early screening.
- **Skin check** – Ask your doctor to perform a screening for skin cancer at your next appointment, and each year after that. Do an at home scan monthly to be sure that there haven't been any changes to the shape or color of moles.
- **Blood work** – It's important to "know your numbers" and how they affect your health. Routine blood work is recommended annually.
- If you haven't seen your doctor recently or had your regular screenings, make it an end-of-year goal for good health.

Great Gifts for Healthy Living

This holiday season, why not give gifts that improve health and well-being? With lots of fun options, you're sure to find something for everyone on your list:

- **Activity Tracking Device** - Getting fit is more fun with a mobile device that tracks steps, distance, time, calories burned, heart rate and more.
- **Spa Gift Certificate** - A little pampering and relaxation will be a welcome gift for the busiest people you know.
- **Smartphone sport armband** - For keeping connected and hands-free while working out, these armbands fit the bill.
- **Personal Training Gift Certificate** - Even novice exercisers will be more confident and motivated after a session or two with a certified personal trainer
- **Fitness Video Games** - Kids of all ages will appreciate a fun and interactive game that also challenges their fitness.
- **Resistance Bands** - With dozens of ways to use these ingenious little bands, they're great for improving strength and flexibility or aiding in stretching routines.
- **Water Bottle** - Encourage hydration with a bottle that infuses water with a subtle hint of fruit flavor.

Urgent Care vs. ER — Know Where to Go for Care

Stay safe and save with Access2day Health.

Whether you're feeling sick, need stitches, or have a sprained ankle, you should always seek appropriate medical care as soon as possible. But with stress (or even a fever) running high, it can be difficult to decide between **urgent care** or the **emergency room (ER)**—and while “urgency” and “emergency” do sound similar, knowing how the two are different can save you thousands.

If you're not sure what exactly qualifies an ER visit versus an urgent care visit, you're not alone—almost one-third of ER visits are found to be unnecessary. Although this confusion is common, turning what should've been an urgent care visit into an ER visit can cost you upwards of \$2,000 depending on your insurance coverage. So, before an unexpected health situation occurs, how do you know when you should go to an urgent care clinic or the ER?

One quick way to know if an emergency room visit is necessary is if your injury or sickness is life or limb-threatening. Broadly, this includes any scenario where your life is endangered, or where you are at risk of losing a limb, eye, or consciousness. More specifically, you will need **emergency care** if you're experiencing any of the symptoms listed below.

Seek Emergency Care for:

- High Fevers (103 or Higher)
- Chest Pain or Difficulty Breathing
- Major Allergic Reactions
- Broken Bones
- Severe Cuts
- Back, Neck, Eye, or Head Injuries
- Moderate to Severe Burns
- Possible Drug Overdose or Poisoning



On the other hand, even if you're feeling extremely unwell, you'll likely only need **urgent care** if your injury or condition is **NOT** life or limb-threatening. Some common reasons to visit an urgent care center include the following:

Seek Urgent Care for:

- Moderate Fever (Under 103) or Flu
- Minor Accidents & Falls
- Possible Fractures & X-Rays
- Sprains & Strains
- Cuts That Need Stitches
- Skin Rashes & Infections
- Lower Back Pain
- Insect Bites, Minor Animal Bites

Knowing when to seek urgent or emergency care ahead of time can save time, money, and even your health. With Access2day Health, you can also receive \$0 urgent care (and \$0 preventative and primary care) at any Access2day Health clinic location. And, if you haven't received your flu shot yet this year, you can also stop by any Access2day Health clinic for a zero-cost, zero-appointment flu shot!

Find My Nearest Clinic

<https://access2dayhealth.com/locations.php>

And speaking of cold and flu season, if you're feeling sick but are unsure of which treatment options are best, you can learn more about the differences between common viruses (like COVID-19, the flu, and the common cold) and bacterial infections by watching the brief webinar video linked below:

Is it a Virus, a Cold, or Covid?

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/2625277960578045018>

Sheet-Pan Eggs with Spinach & Ham



Making a big batch of eggs has never been easier with this one-pan oven-baked eggs recipe. Whether you are making brunch for a crowd or just want to meal-prepare healthy breakfasts for the week, you'll have 12 servings ready in just 45 minutes.

Ingredients:

- 18 large eggs
- 1 ½ teaspoons smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon ground pepper
- 1 10 oz. package frozen chopped spinach, thawed and dried
- ½ cup diced ham
- ¼ cup reduced-fat milk
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 cup shredded sharp Cheddar cheese

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 300 degrees F. Generously coat a large rimmed baking sheet with cooking spray.
2. Whisk eggs, milk, smoked paprika, salt, pepper and onion powder together in a large bowl. Pour onto the prepared baking sheet and sprinkle with spinach, Cheddar and ham.
3. Bake until just set, 20 to 25 minutes, rotating the pan from back to front halfway through baking to ensure even cooking.
4. Cut into 12 squares and serve.

How does your fat tissue affect your health? Help us find out!

The EAT2 research study will look at the changes that occur in the fat tissue as a result of weight gain (and weight loss) and the effects on your health.

To qualify for this research study, participants should:

- Be a man or pre-menopausal woman
- Be 18 - 42 years of age
- Have a BMI between 23 - 35 [[Calculate your BMI here](#)]

Compensation of up to \$1,255 is offered for completion of the study. To view this and other Pennington Biomedical research studies, please visit www.pbrc.edu/HealthierLA.

Parents: Is your child 3 or 4 years old? See if they qualify for the Mini Movers research study!

The purpose of the Mini Movers research study is to figure out what active play, screen-time, and sleep look like in the home environment. We want to find ways to help kids move more and sleep well.

To qualify for this research study, your child should:

- Be 3-4 years old
- Be physically capable of exercise and have no parent-reported mobility limitations
- Have a parent who is willing to use their mobile phone for the study

Compensation of up to \$100 is offered for the completion of this study. To view this and other Pennington Biomedical research studies, please visit www.pbrc.edu/HealthierLA.



Omada has helped more than **1 million** members in their journey to better health.

3 Positive Food Mantras for the Holidays

Enjoy your holiday favorites without the guilt. The holidays often mean rich, delicious meals and treats ... sometimes followed by guilt. Skip the guilt this year with the help of these positive food messages and Omada®. You'll feel good about eating and feel even better about yourself.

“I’m satisfying myself, not others.”

Try not to let the cook's feelings control what or how much you eat, you alone get to decide. Enjoy the moment and let the cook know that you appreciate the meal (and them!)

“What I eat on a daily basis matters most.”

One or many big holiday meals won't undo all the progress you've made. Remind yourself what matters more is what you do the rest of the year, not these few days.

“A snack before a big meal can be good for me.”

No need to avoid snacking before a big meal to cut calories or “save” room. Eating a small, healthy snack can help satisfy cravings and help blood sugar so you don't eat too much later.

If you or your adult family member are at risk for diabetes or heart disease and enrolled in an Office of Group Benefits Blue Cross health plan, the Office of Group Benefits, in partnership with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana, will cover the entire cost of the program—a \$650 value.



Zero cost for eligible members



Dedicated care team with a health coach (yes, real people)



Personalized care plan tailored to each member's lifestyle



Smart devices to easily track your progress, 24/7



Omada is available at no cost when covered by your employer or health plan.

* Certain features and smart devices are only available if you meet program and clinical eligibility requirements. Images, including avatars, do not reflect real members or information about a specific person.

Claim your benefit at omadahealth.com/ogb

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