

## Don't Let Celebration Lead to Drunk Driving Incident

Holiday parties and merriment often lead to an upswing in drunk driving arrests and accidents. The problem is a safety concern for every driver on the road.

The statistics are compelling. According to the National Commission Against Drunk Driving:

- o More than 17,000 Americans die each year in alcohol-related traffic crashes.
- o 41 percent of all traffic crashes are alcohol-related.
- o Nearly 600,000 Americans are injured in alcohol-related traffic crashes each year.
- o Someone dies in an alcohol-related traffic crash every 30 minutes.
- o 3 out of every 10 Americans face the possibility of being directly involved in an alcohol-related traffic crash during their lifetime.

If you are hosting a holiday party, it's vitally important to take steps to help ensure all of your guests arrive home safely afterwards. Here are some ideas to help your guests enjoy your party and stay safe:

- o As host, it's important that you stay sober during the celebration in order to ensure your guests' good time and safety.
- o In addition to plenty of water and soft drinks, have "virgin" versions of mixed drinks available for the designated drivers in the group.
- o Hire a car and driver for the evening to help escort your guests home.
- o Have plenty of food on hand to counter the effects of alcohol.
- o Stop serving alcohol 1-2 hours prior to the end of the party—offer specialty coffees as an alternative beverage.
- o Call a taxi and enlist the help of others for anyone who you believe is too drunk to drive.

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## Maintenance Chiropractic Care Prevents Relapse in Disability, Study Suggests

Maintenance care appears to accomplish exactly what chiropractors have long claimed it does. According to a new study, maintenance care prevents chronic disability in patients with low-back pain.

Investigators tracked 2 groups of 15 patients with chronic low back pain. Both groups underwent chiropractic care for a 1-month period. One group received no maintenance care while the other received adjustments every 3 weeks. Nine months later both groups were re-evaluated.

For both groups the pain and disability levels decreased after the intensive phase of treatments. Both groups maintained their pain scores at levels similar to the post-intensive treatments throughout the follow-up period.

For the disability scores, however, only the group that was given spinal adjustments during the follow-up period maintained their post-intensive treatment scores. The disability scores of the other group went back to their pretreatment levels.

This suggests that maintenance spinal adjustments after intensive chiropractic care may be beneficial to patients in order to maintain a better quality of life.

Preventicare.com  
JMPT – October 2004; 27: 509.  
[www.mosby.com/jmpt](http://www.mosby.com/jmpt)

## Less Sleep Means Weight Gain

LAS VEGAS, Nov. 17 (UPI) -- People who get more sleep each night have less risk of becoming obese, according to a Columbia University study to be released Wednesday at a U.S. conference.

The study involved 6,115 people between the ages of 32 and 59, USA Today reported. Among the findings, to be presented by researchers at the annual meeting of the North American Association for the Study of Obesity in Las Vegas, is that people who sleep two to four hours a night are 73 percent more likely to be obese than normal sleepers -- those who sleep seven to nine hours per night. Those who get five hours of sleep are 50 percent more likely to be obese.

"Getting more sleep actually had a protective effect against obesity," lead researcher James Gangwisch told the newspaper. However, he said the study does not prove cause and effect, but rather association. "Sleep deprivation activates a small part of the hypothalamus (region of the brain) that is also involved in appetite regulation," sleep researcher Eve Van Cauter of the University of Chicago told USA Today.

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## 16% of Adults Have Back Pain

LA GRANGE, Ill., Nov. 9 (UPI) -- About one in six U.S. adults suffer from chronic back pain and experienced pain every day last month, the Illinois-based North American Spine Society said.

The non-profit medical group dedicated to spine care surveyed 1,014 adults who had back pain about the condition of their backs over the last 30 days.

Sixty-four percent of women and 50% of men had experienced back pain. Nearly 1/3 reported difficulty lying in bed, 22 % said it was uncomfortable to drive, and 18 percent said back pain had decreased sexual activity.

More than a quarter of respondents said back pain made it too difficult to engage in vigorous physical exercise and 32 percent were unable to lift heavy objects. More than a quarter blamed aging for a bad back.

"With 76 million aging baby boomers living in the United States, back pain will continue to be a major health concern," said Dr. Thomas Errico, the society's president.

Sixteen percent said their back pain resulted from a workplace injury and 14 percent said they were hurt from a sports or exercise-related incident. Only 9 percent blamed back pain on an automobile accident. University of Chicago.

## Tips to Avoid Overeating This Holiday Season

Whether you are currently on a diet or not, overeating is a common holiday-related problem. With an abundance of food and drink available at parties, family gatherings, and at the office, we often overeat. Overeating can be a double threat, as many people overeat as a way of coping with the increased stress or feelings of depression during this time of the year.



There's no need to deprive yourself this time of year—after all the food is part of the fun. If you employ a few smart strategies, indulging in holiday goodies does not have to mean a lot of excess guilt and weight. Here are some tips:

- On the day of a party, don't skip breakfast and/or lunch in order to "save up" for the party. You'll wind up consuming way more than if you had eaten normal meals throughout the day. A light, nutritious meal just before the party will also ward off the tendency to overindulge.
- By all means, sample all of the foods you like—just keep portions under control. The smaller your portions, the more variety you get to enjoy.
- Remember, parties are for enjoying the company of friends and family, and good food enhance enhances that atmosphere—not the other way around.
- Pay attention to what you're drinking. Alcoholic calories add up fast, especially with eggnog. Have ice water every other drink.
- Have a polite "no, thank you" ready when dinner party hosts insist on seconds.
- Be conscious of the "little" opportunities for overeating, such as the office cookies. If this is a weakness for you, add an extra 10 minutes to your workouts to compensate.

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## Buying Safe Toys for Kids

Shopping for children's toys can be great fun, but there are so many choices that making a good decision can be difficult. Buying a toy that's appropriate for the age of its recipient is important, not just for the child's enjoyment, but also for safety reasons.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission offers these guidelines for toy safety:



- Children under 3 are especially susceptible to choking hazards as they tend to put everything in their mouths. Avoid buying any toy with small parts that could pose a choking danger.
  - Avoid marbles, balls, and games with balls, that have a diameter of 1.75 inches or less. These products also pose a choking hazard to young children.
  - Children at this age pull, prod and twist toys. Look for toys that are well-made with tightly secured eyes, noses and other parts.
- Avoid toys that have sharp edges and points.
- Never let children of any age play with balloons that are broken or not inflated because of the choking danger.
- Avoid toys that are constructed with thin, brittle plastic that might easily break into small pieces or leave jagged edges.
- If buying a toy gun, be sure the barrel, or the entire gun, is brightly colored so that it's not mistaken for a real gun.
- Look for household art materials, including crayons and paint sets, marked with the designation "ASTM D-4236." This means the product has been reviewed by a toxicologist and, if necessary, labeled with cautionary information.

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## Drinking Sodas Can Harm Teeth

Popular soft drinks -- especially non-cola drinks and canned ice tea -- can harm tooth enamel, U.S. researchers said. Researchers at the Academy of General Dentistry found that, over time, exposing dental enamel to carbonated beverages and non-carbonated canned ice tea weakens and permanently destroys enamel.

Researchers exposed healthy dental enamel to a variety of popular beverages over a period of 14 days. They found non-colas and canned iced tea were especially harmful. The drinks contain flavor additives, such as malic, tartaric and other organic acids, which are more aggressive at eroding teeth, they said. Root beer, which contains the least amount of flavor additives, was found to be the "safest soft drink to safeguard dental enamel."

About 27 percent of the beverages consumed by Americans are soft drinks, the researchers noted. Overall, soft drink consumption has steadily increased over the years, and remains on the rise, contributing to an increase in oral health problems in the form of cavities, they said.

In 1977, children ages 12 to 19 drank, on average, 16 ounces of soda a day. In 1996, the same age group consumed an average of 28 ounces a day.

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## Breastfeeding Prevents Obesity

Pittsburgh researchers say breastfeeding babies exclusively for their first four months reduces their risk of obesity when they reach preschool age.

When formula supplements are added, the breastfeeding must continue for six months for the same anti-obesity benefit, researchers at Mathematica Policy Research Inc. and the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh said.

The researchers studied 73,000 low-income children and found the risk of obesity was reduced in 30 percent to 45 percent of breastfed children. The benefit was seen in white children born to mothers who did not smoke during pregnancy. Only 10 percent of the children studied were breastfed for the required time period.

The results appear in the latest issue of Obesity Research, a journal published by the North American Association for the Study of Obesity.

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"A predisposition toward optimism seemed to provide a survival benefit in elderly subjects with relatively short life expectancies otherwise."

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### Girls Benefit from Family Meals

Minnesota researchers say frequency and quality of family meals have a great deal to do with preventing eating disorders in girls.

A University of Minnesota team has found the importance, structure, and atmosphere of family meals may help steer adolescent girls from eating disorders.

Girls who ate regular family meals in a structured and positive environment were less likely to exhibit extreme weight control behaviors, such as diet pill use, vomiting and chronic dieting.

The meal itself provides an opportunity to model healthy eating habits to children, and it also gives parents the chance to talk with their children, said study author Dianne Neumark-Sztainer, an epidemiologist.

She found that:

1. Girls who ate three to four family meals per week were at about 1/3 the risk for extreme weight control practices.
2. Girls who ate five family meals per week were at about one-fourth the risk for extreme weight control practices.
3. Boys also benefit from family meals, but the association was not as strong as it is for girls.

The study is summarized in this month's issue of the Journal of Adolescent Health.

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### Optimists Live Longer

Highly optimistic patients have lower risks of death in general as well as lower rates of cardiovascular death than pessimists, a Dutch study found.

Dr. Erik J. Giltay, of the Psychiatric Center GGZ Delfland, in Delft, the Netherlands analyzed data from 1,000 patients of the Arnhem Elderly Study and questioned them on their health, self-respect, morale, optimism and relationships.

Participants reporting high levels of optimism had a 55 percent lower risk of death from all causes and a 23 percent lower risk of cardiovascular death. "We found that the trait of optimism was an important long-term determinant of all-cause and cardiovascular mortality in elderly subjects independent of sociodemographic characteristics and cardiovascular risk factors," the authors wrote in the Archives of General Psychiatry.

### Computer Protection for High Speed Internet Users

If you use a high-speed connection such as DSL or a cable modem to access the Internet you are at special risk to hackers and viruses, since your connection is "always on." Here are some tips to beef up protection and help you to stay safe online:

Use anti-virus software. A virus can result in lost data or require costly repairs to your system. You can avoid these risks by installing and using software that scans your computer and your incoming email for viruses, and then deletes them. Look for anti-virus software that recognizes current viruses, as well as older ones; that can effectively reverse the damage; and that updates automatically.

Install a firewall. A firewall is software or hardware designed to block hackers from accessing your computer. A firewall helps make you invisible on the Internet and blocks all communications from unauthorized sources.

Don't open email from unknown sources. Most viruses won't damage your computer unless you open the email attachment that includes the virus. Don't open an email attachment - even if it appears to be from a friend or coworker - unless you are expecting it or know what it contains. If you send an email with an attached file, include a text message explaining what it is.

If your computer is infected, take action immediately. Scan your entire computer with fully updated anti-virus software and update your firewall.

Use strong passwords. Use passwords that have at least eight characters and include numerals or symbols. Don't use your personal information, your login name or adjacent keys on the keyboard as passwords.

Take advantage of your software's security features. Check the "Tools" or "Options" menus for built-in security features included with your browser or email software. You probably have several choices for what types of files you want to accept from other computers. If you don't understand your choices, check them out using your "Help" function.

Turn off software features that you don't use. You may want to turn "off" some software features - instant messaging, printer-sharing or file-sharing - that typically are "on" when a computer is shipped. If you're not using your computer for an extended period, you can turn it off or unplug it from the phone or cable line. When it's off, the computer doesn't send or receive information from the Internet and isn't vulnerable to hackers.

Back up important files. No system is completely secure. If you have important files stored on your computer, copy them onto removable discs and store them in a safe place.

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