

You FIRST

Your Month of Well-being

DECEMBER 2024

Holiday Stress Management & Self-Care

This December, as we prepare to close out another year, the holiday season is also upon us. For many, this time of the year brings joy and cherished traditions. However, it can also bring increased stress as we juggle the hustle of holiday preparation. In this newsletter, we'll explore practical strategies for managing stress, maintaining self-care and finding balance during this festive season.

Stress: What's the Deal?

What is Stress?

Stress is **how our body responds to pressures or tension**, whether physical or emotional.

When you're under stress, **your body releases hormones like cortisol, which produce the "fight-or-flight" response.**

Occasional stress is normal, but long-term stress may contribute to a range of physical and mental health problems.

Signs of Stress

- Feelings of fear, anger, sadness, worry, numbness, or frustration.
- Changes in appetite, energy, and interests.
- Headaches and trouble concentrating.
- Fatigue and body pains.
- Nightmares or problems sleeping.

Source: [Coping with Stress](#) | [Stress](#) | [CDC](#)

Managing Holiday Stress

Here are some tips to help you enjoy the holiday season to the fullest:

- Set clear boundaries and limit your commitments.
- Plan your schedule in advance to avoid last-minute stress.
- Stick to a holiday budget to prevent financial strain. Get tips on budgeting, saving, and more through SmartDollar, a **free** online financial program available to you through your [CareFirst WellBeing](#) platform!
- Make time for activities that help you unwind, like reading or getting a massage.
- Prioritize eating well so you can feel your best. Focus on unprocessed foods like whole grains, vegetables and fresh fruit.
- Exercise daily. Movement naturally produces stress-relieving hormones and improves overall physical health.
- Practice deep breathing. Deep breathing can help you relax and reverse the body's stress response.

Reflect, Recharge, Reset

As we wrap up 2024, it's the perfect time to recharge and set ourselves up for a healthier, more balanced 2025.

- **Reflect on 2024:** Take a few moments to think about your wins, challenges, and personal growths from the past year. Celebrate your achievements!
- **Set intentions for 2025:** Instead of overwhelming yourself with resolutions, choose 1-2 areas of self-care or personal growth to focus on next year.
- **Create a self-care plan:** Think of small, doable habits that you can carry from the holiday season into the new year. Examples include daily walks, journaling, yoga, or meditation.
- **Prioritize what matters:** Focus on what brings you joy and balance — whether it's your hobbies, your family, or a weekly break for yourself.

Tip! Meditation and deep breathing are effective for “resetting” your body because they directly influence your nervous system, allowing you to transition from “fight-or-flight” to a calmer “rest and digest” state, which can reduce anxiety, improve focus and regulate emotions. Check out videos you can follow anywhere, anytime through the [CareFirst WellBeing Inspirations & Unwinding programs!](#)

Wellness Wednesday Webinars!

Join the CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield (CareFirst) Wellness and Disease Management team once a month on Wednesdays to learn more about that month's health observance and how you can prioritize your health and wellbeing!

December 4, 2024: Healthy Holidays

How can you strive for and embrace a balanced, joyful, and healthy holiday season? Whether you want to manage your weight, reduce stress, and maintain your overall well-being during the holidays, this webinar is for you. Presented by Katie Powell, Health and WellBeing Ambassador.

Click [here](#) to register!

To access these member resources, log in to or sign up for [CareFirst WellBeing](#). Once logged in, select **Your Wellness Resources**. Next, click **Relax & Reset or Health & Fitness** and then the program of interest. *You need to meet clinical eligibility criteria through an online assessment for Noom and Eat Right Now.*

CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield Member Resources

- **Inspirations and Unwinding:** Find help to reduce daily worry and stress. Both programs include videos and audio for relaxation, mindfulness and better sleep behaviors.
- **One-on-One Health Coaching:** As part of your CareFirst WellBeing program, you can participate in personal health coaching—at no cost to you. Your health coach will work with you and provide the support, guidance and encouragement you need to see real results!
- **Noom:** Designed to help you achieve and maintain a healthy weight. It can also help lower the risk for chronic conditions like diabetes. There is no cost, and your privacy is assured!
- **Eat Right Now:** An innovative program that combines neuroscience and mindfulness to help you and your relationship with eating and make meaningful, lasting lifestyle changes.

Blue365 Featured Deal for December

Save 20% on Health-Boosting Tea Products Plus Free Shipping! Boost Immunity and Energy with Organic, Non-GMO Products from Health&Tea. Powered by nature, Health&Tea products are 100% plant-based with lots of functional benefits. Health&Tea's Matcha and Tea are organic, non-GMO, gluten free, and vegan. To take advantage of Blue365 deals, register now at [carefirst.com/wellnessdiscounts](#).