

## REDUCING STRESS DURING THE HOLIDAYS

The holiday season is upon us. All the cooking, and the shopping and the parties. Families and friends to see. So many details! It can be a wonderful time of year, but also one, regardless of how much we anticipate and enjoy the festivities, which can cause stress, especially for the cancer patient. The days between Thanksgiving and New Year's don't have to be pressure-filled, though. In fact, by putting into action some of the following strategies, cancer patients can alleviate some of the tension and still keep the door open for celebrating during the season.

Stress and fatigue are taxing and counterproductive to healing. Evaluate your to do list. Where possible, eliminate things that are stressful, or that leave you without adequate time to rest. Do you really have to reorganize the ornaments this year? Perhaps waiting until treatment is over before tackling all those boxes in the basement will lighten the load and give you extra time to relax.

Prioritizing is key with holiday festivities, especially when there are multiple doctor's appointments to keep, along with work and family responsibilities. To minimize stress and fatigue, choose what's important where holiday events and details are concerned and forget the rest. It's really okay NOT to do everything. Even more okay? Say no! Take care of yourself and save your energy for the events and activities that matter the most to you.

Also, don't attend events that are draining. Choose gatherings that are uplifting and energizing, and remember to make sure members of your support network attend events with you. It's also helpful to set limits. Decide how long you'll stay at a particular party; moreover, if you're at a party and beginning to feel weary, listen to your body and head home, rather than wearing yourself out.

Consider your family's traditions. Which ones are the most meaningful, the most stressful or the most fatiguing? Again, prioritize and keep the ones that matter most - perhaps the top three - and let the rest go this year. If you've always been the host for a particular family or friend gathering, consider starting a new tradition and change up the routine by inviting someone else to take the reins, or by moving the party to a different location.

Holidays can add extra financial burdens to families. As a strategy to reduce stress, and to experiment with a new tradition, consider drawing names with families for gift giving, or consider giving cards, or pooling money and making a family contribution to a charity. Some families find that trying something new invigorates the holidays not only to the cancer patient, but the rest of the family, as well.

If gift giving is your thing, consider creative ways to make shopping less tiresome. Catalogs and online shopping make gift purchasing much easier, leaving you with time to rest and keep clear of crowded shopping areas.

If you find you have taken on too much over the holidays, or begin to feel stressed and in need of additional support, support group meetings at our center are a great way to share your challenges and learn new ideas from others facing similar struggles. Sometimes hearing from another cancer patient who shares the same common ground can give you a fresh approach to overcoming challenges.

And finally, remember that your patient guide is a great resource and can work with you and your family members to help develop an action plan to help make this holiday season right for you.



**RECIPE CORNER**  
**QUICK CHICKEN AND DUMPLINGS**



Try this yummy soup from *Eating Well Through Cancer*, by Holly Clegg, for an easy, nutritious meal, perfect now that the weather is cooler. The flour tortillas are a great trick to use for no-trouble dumplings and will enhance the chicken soup. This recipe makes 8 to 10 servings. (Go to [www.hollyclegg.com](http://www.hollyclegg.com) for more information about this cookbook and author).

*Ingredients*

- 5 1/4 cups canned fat-free chicken broth
- 5 1/4 cups water
- 1 1/2 pounds boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into pieces
- 1 cup sliced carrots
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 10 (6-inch) flour tortillas

*Directions*

Pour the chicken broth and water into a large pot. Add the chicken pieces, carrots and salt and pepper to taste. Bring the mixture to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium and continue to cook for 25 minutes, or until chicken is done and carrots are tender. Cut the tortillas into small wedges. Add the cut up tortillas to the pot and stir. Continue to cook until the tortillas are tender, about 5 minutes. If you need more liquid in pot, add more broth or water.

*Nutritional information per serving:*

Calories 178 Protein (g) 20, Carbohydrate (g) 15, Fat (g) 4, Calories from fat (%) 20, Saturated Fat (g) 0, Dietary Fiber (g) 0, Cholesterol (mg) 40, Sodium (mg) 598, Diabetic Exchanges: 2 very lean meat, 1 starch

**PATIENT GUIDE'S CORNER**

*It's the Small Things*

As a patient guide at SGCCC, although a lot of my work revolves around the medical needs of my patients, there are lots of small things I do to help make the path from diagnosis through treatment to survivorship more pleasant. As I come and go through the center each day, I see all the people in the waiting area - many of whom are here daily for a span of weeks or months for treatment. It's a comfortable space, but I felt like something was missing among the magazines and chairs. Then it dawned on me, coffee!

I thought that it would be nice for patients and their families to enjoy coffee while they waited, so I worked with Teresa, the center's administrative manager, to purchase a Keurig coffee maker for the waiting area. I decided on the Keurig since it makes coffee or tea one cup at a time, and everyone seems to love it! The first day it was set up, patients and families raved over it all morning. The wife of one of our patients even commented, "What a nice touch. Appreciate you thinking of patients and families."

I also felt like some of our patients could use some words of encouragement - a few seemed down recently - so I decided we would send cards to people receiving treatment now. These cards, the coffee maker, they're just small things, but I believe they make the big things better.

--Kymberly Clausen

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**DECEMBER 2011**

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2	3
4	MAN TO MAN SUPPORT GROUP @ EAST GEORGIA REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER EDUCATION 6:30PM - 8:30PM	5	HOLIDAY ART THERAPY 9AM - 12PM	6	7	8
9	10	11	BREAST CANCER SUPPORT GROUP @ AVERITT CENTER FOR ARTS 33 EAST MAIN STREET 6PM - 7PM	12	13	14
15	16	17	NUTRITION COUNSELING 9AM - 2PM	18	19	20
21	22	23	NUTRITION COUNSELING 9AM - 3PM	24	25	26
27	28	29	HOLIDAY ART THERAPY 9AM - 12PM	30	31	CHRISTMAS EVE
CHRISTMAS	CLOSED FOR HOLIDAY		CANCER SUPPORT GROUP @ COMFORT INN AND SUITES CONFERENCE ROOM 17870 HIGHWAY 67 6PM - 7PM			NEW YEAR'S EVE
			27	28	29	30

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