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HOW HOLIDAY STRESS CAN IMPACT CHILDREN

UNDERSTANDING THE HOLIDAY BLUES

The holiday season, from Thanksgiving to New Year's, is often called "the most wonderful time of the year." For many, it's a time for fun traditions, family gatherings, and celebrations. But for some, this season brings stress, sadness, or even depression—feelings known as the "holiday blues."

The holiday blues aren't a mental illness but a temporary drop in mood caused by the stress of the holiday season. However, if someone is dealing with noticeable depressive episodes during specific seasons for at least two consecutive years, it could be a sign of [Seasonal Affective Disorder](#). While holiday blues are not a mental illness, they can make existing mental health conditions worse.

Even those who enjoy the holidays can experience the holiday blues. Busy schedules, emotional memories,

financial pressures, and loneliness can leave anyone feeling overwhelmed. In fact, 64% of people with mental health conditions say the [holidays make their symptoms worse](#).

WHY DO I FEEL THIS WAY?

Understanding the holiday blues can help us better support ourselves and others during this emotional time of year. People might experience holiday blues for many reasons, such as:

- **Lack of sleep.** A hectic holiday schedule can lead to a lack of sleep, which increases stress.
- **Excess eating and alcohol use.** People sometimes turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms to handle holiday sadness and stress. Excessive drinking and overeating can make the symptoms of holiday depression even more pronounced.
- **Financial stress.** Overextending yourself financially or struggling to afford gifts for family and friends can create an added burden of financial stress.
- **Isolation and loneliness.** Being unable to spend the holidays with your family and friends can make the holiday season seem especially lonely.
- **Unrealistic expectations.** The commercialization of the holidays can create the expectation of nonstop joy and holiday cheer, which can lead to holiday stress and sadness.

Because the holidays mark an impending new year, people tend to reflect on the past year. They might feel regret, failure, or other negative emotions.

HELPING KIDS COPE WITH HOLIDAY STRESS

When people talk about the holiday blues, the focus is often on adults. However, children and teens can experience seasonal stress just as much, and research shows that child psychiatric hospitalizations peak during the winter months. Several factors can contribute to holiday blues in young people, and parental stress can make these

feelings worse. Common triggers for children and teens include:

- Irregular sleep schedules.
- Spending time with unfamiliar or rarely-seen relatives.
- Pressure to meet high expectations for behavior or reactions.
- Eating too many sweets or treats.
- Disruptions to their regular routines.

These changes can lead to feelings of sadness or even [depression in kids and teens](#). It's important to understand what might be causing these feelings and take steps to address them. If you're concerned, reach out to your child's pediatrician for guidance and support.

Through ThriveOn, caregivers can also access to [Bloom: Supporting You in Growing Kids' Mental Well-Being](#). This free and confidential resource is designed for busy parents and caregivers. It offers digital courses and videos to help you support the kids in your life in building strong mental well-being.

While holiday blues are typically short-lived, it's important to seek help if they linger or interfere with daily life. Emotional Wellbeing Solutions (EWS) offers confidential support 24/7 to benefits-eligible employees, their dependents, and household members—even those not enrolled in the medical plan. EWS provides up to 8 free counseling sessions per issue per year, at no cost to you.

Take advantage of these resources to make this holiday season a healthier and happier time for you and your family.

[FIND AN IN-NETWORK PROVIDER](#)

[EXPLORE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COVERAGE](#)

[EXPLORE EMOTIONAL WELLBEING SOLUTIONS](#)



NAVIGATING POSTPARTUM HEALTH

CARE, RESOURCES, AND ADVOCACY

Childbirth is a life-changing experience that marks the beginning of a new chapter. While it's a time of joy and transformation, it's also a period when health complications can arise, sometimes unexpectedly. Comprehensive postpartum care is vital for safeguarding the health of new mothers and addressing the unique challenges they face during the weeks and months following delivery.

WHY POSTPARTUM CARE MATTERS

Postpartum care focuses on monitoring and supporting a mother's recovery after childbirth, typically starting within the first three weeks and continuing as needed. These visits are more than routine checkups; they provide critical screenings for complications, discussions about family planning, and personalized care to address specific health needs.

Health risks like postpartum preeclampsia, infections, or postpartum mood disorders often surface in the weeks after delivery. In fact, research shows that nearly one-third of severe maternal morbidity (SMM) events occur during the six weeks following hospital discharge. Black women, in particular, face heightened risks of complications and mortality due to structural racism, discrimination, and limited access to quality care.

ADVOCATING FOR YOUR HEALTH

Every mother deserves compassionate, comprehensive postpartum care. You are your own best advocate. Here are ways to ensure you receive the care you need:

- **Build a Support Network:** Surround yourself with friends, family, or a postpartum doula. Check for community programs offering free or low-cost doula support.

- **Ask Questions:** Understanding your health and care plan empowers you to make informed decisions.
- **Seek Alternative Care if Needed:** If you feel unheard or unsatisfied, don't hesitate to find another provider.
- **Know the Warning Signs:** Notify your doctor if you experience symptoms like heavy bleeding, fever, persistent pain, or mood changes. For emergencies like seizures, chest pain, or signs of shock, call 911 immediately.

EXPANDED POSTPARTUM SUPPORT FROM FRANKLIN COUNTY COOPERATIVE

At Franklin County Cooperative, we are committed to ensuring that every mother receives the care she deserves. Our offerings include enhanced maternity and postpartum services that provide tailored support during this critical time.

The Fourth Trimester Clinic: Located at OhioHealth Dublin Methodist Hospital, the [Fourth Trimester Clinic](#) is a dedicated space for addressing postpartum needs. This clinic supplements routine OB-GYN care, offering specialized services, including:

- **Lactation Medicine:** Support for breastfeeding, managing milk supply, and treating recurrent mastitis.
- **Postpartum High Blood Pressure Management:** Monitoring and treatment to reduce complications.
- **Behavioral Health Support:** Assistance with postpartum depression, anxiety, and grief counseling for pregnancy loss.

ADDITIONAL FRANKLIN COUNTY COOPERATIVE BENEFITS

- **Doula Coverage:** Up to \$3,000 per pregnancy, with no time limits on postpartum assistance.
- **Maternity Support Program:** Check-ins during the first six weeks postpartum, with extended support as needed.
- **Maven Maternity Track:** Guidance and resources for mothers up to 12 months postpartum.

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

The postpartum period can bring physical and emotional challenges, but with the right support, it can also be a time of healing and growth. Franklin

County Cooperative is here to walk alongside you, providing resources that empower you to thrive.

If you're navigating postpartum health concerns or simply want additional support, we encourage you to take advantage of these services. Your well-being matters, and we are dedicated to ensuring you have the healthiest possible postpartum experience for you and your family.

EXPLORE FAMILY FORMING COVERAGE



2024 NEEDS & INTEREST SURVEY RESULTS

PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS FOR 2025

We're excited to share the results of this year's Annual Needs & Interest Survey and highlight the meaningful updates coming your way in 2025 based on your feedback. The attached document outlines the key themes raised by employees and the steps Franklin County Cooperative is taking to address them.

Your feedback has been instrumental in shaping these initiatives. Dive into the document to learn more about how Franklin County Cooperative is responding to your needs and improving our programs to better serve you including prorated gym membership reimbursements and more frequent incentive payments.

If you have further questions, please reach out to Benefits@franklincountyohio.gov or ThriveOn@franklincountyohio.gov.

2024 NEEDS & INTEREST SURVEY RESULTS

NURSES' NOTES

From Your  UnitedHealthcare Health Engagement Nurses

HAPPY AND HEALTHY HOLIDAYS

The holiday season is a time of joy, togetherness, and celebration—but it can also be a challenging time to maintain healthy habits. With an abundance of rich foods, festive drinks, and packed schedules, it's easy to feel derailed from your health goals. Fortunately, your Health Engagement Nurses are here with practical tips to help you stay on track and enjoy a happy, healthy holiday season.

Embrace the Joys of the Holidays, Mindfully

The holidays are filled with delights—elaborate meals, delectable desserts, cherished traditions, and time with loved ones. These experiences are meaningful, but they can also pose challenges to your well-being. Here's how to enjoy the season while supporting your health:

- 1. Eat Strategically Before Events:** Avoid arriving at gatherings on an empty stomach. Eating a light, healthy snack beforehand can help curb hunger and reduce the temptation to overindulge.
- 2. Bring a Healthy Option:** Be a thoughtful guest and bring a nutritious dish! Consider fresh veggies with a low-fat dip or a wholesome side to complement the main meal.
- 3. Make Smart Substitutions:** Simple ingredient swaps can make recipes lighter without sacrificing flavor. For example, use Greek yogurt instead of sour cream or applesauce in place of oil when baking.
- 4. Choose Beverages Wisely:** Alcoholic drinks can pack a calorie punch, with some containing 150 to 450 calories per serving. Consider enjoying sparkling water with a splash of juice, or alternate alcoholic beverages with water to stay hydrated and mindful.
- 5. Keep Perspective:** One day of indulgence won't ruin your health goals. Weight gain typically results from consistent overeating over time, not a single meal. If you overdo it, let it go and return to your usual healthy habits the next day.
- 6. Focus on Connection:** Shift the focus from food to the true meaning of the holiday season. Spend quality time with loved ones, engage in meaningful conversations, and create lasting memories.
- 7. Stay Active:** Keep your body moving to boost both physical and mental well-being. Sign up for a 5K, participate in a fitness challenge, or simply take walks to enjoy the season. Regular exercise can help manage stress and maintain your energy levels.

Make This Holiday Season Your Healthiest Yet

By staying mindful of your choices, you can enjoy the holidays without compromising your health. Remember, it's all about balance, moderation, and making memories with those who matter most. Cheers to a joyful and healthful holiday season!

*As a member of the Franklin County Cooperative, you have access to several confidential and free resources to help you thrive in your everyday life. This includes private conversations with Franklin County's dedicated Health Engagement Nurses, Therese Lentz, Brittany Meszaros and Laura Lawrence. To speak with them, you can call the Onsite EAP and Health Engagement Nurse Support Line at **614.525.6773** or click on the links below.*



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