



CONSCIENTIOUS CARE

REDS, GREENS AND THE HOLIDAY BLUES

Making the most of the season.

Do you have high expectations for this holiday season? According to Mary Doepke, Owner of Home Helpers of Western Springs, "For many people our holiday expectations are unrealistic, and trying to live up to them often creates the 'Holiday Blues.' The stress of rushing from one place to another, dealing with crowds and fighting for parking spaces can be enough to drive people crazy. Wanting to buy those special gifts that are more than you can afford or overindulging in food and beverage can literally make us sick to the stomach."

So what are some practical ways to enjoy the holidays without the short-lived season passing us by in a flash? We offer the following twelve recommendations:

1. Focus on the meaning of the holidays and express yourself in ways that provide you the most joy and fulfillment.
2. Create a festive environment with friends, music, candles, and food when putting up the decorations so it is more enjoyment and less of a chore.
3. Serve others. Volunteer your time, talent and treasure for those less fortunate.
4. Open your home to friends, neighbors and people who may be alone for the holidays.
5. Laugh about the silly and ridiculous things your family members are likely to do, before they arrive.
6. Offer random acts of kindness and do them anonymously.
7. Participate in community events and holiday performances.
8. Create a new holiday tradition and drop an old tradition you never much liked.
9. Do things because you want to do them, not because you feel like to have to do them.
10. Shop, eat and drink in moderation.
11. Make gifts and write letters as a demonstration of your love.
12. Take time to reflect and reminisce about the special people in your life and the many ways we are all blessed.

In addition to setting reasonable expectations, make sure to take time for yourself, get enough sleep and exercise. Be flexible. Do not compare your holidays with those of others; looks can be deceiving. Also, make sure to touch based with people who may have recently lost a loved one, be lonely or out of work.

COMMUNITY OF CARE

WINTER SAFETY – *Health and Hazards*

As the weather gets colder, people, especially older adults, face many potential dangers. Regardless of whether you or your loved ones live in a colder climate where the temperatures fall below freezing, we offer the following winter safety tips.

1. **BUNDLE UP.** Did you know that as a result of lower body weight, inactivity, slower metabolisms, reduced muscle mass and changes to the skin, many older adults are more sensitive to air temperature and are less insulated from the cold? Two common concerns are Frostbite and Hypothermia.

- **FROSTBITE** occurs when parts of the body, most often the nose, cheeks, ears, fingers and toes are exposed to extreme cold. Frostbite can be quite serious. The warning signs include: white or ashy skin color; numbness of the skins, fingers or toes; skins that feels hard.
- **HYPOTHERMIA** occurs when a person's body temperature drops below normal. Hypothermia can be deadly. The warning signs include: shivering, pale or ashy skin tone, confusion, slowed breathing and heart rate.

Practical suggestions:

- Stay indoors when it is extremely cold or windy.
- Wear layers of loose-fitting clothing.
- Cover up when going outdoors. Wear a hat, gloves or mittens, a scarf, a heavy coat, and boots.
- Stay warm and dry.

2. **AVOID SLICK AND SNOW COVERED SURFACES.** Did you know that each year thousands of people die after shoveling a driveway or sidewalk, and that falls are the leading cause of injury related death for older adults? Many injuries can be avoided if people take simple precautionary measures.

Practical suggestions:

- Do not shovel snow unless you are physically fit and your body is used to regular exercise.
 - i. When it is cold outside, the heart is already working harder than normal to circulate blood to help keep the body warm.
 - ii. Shoveling snow can strain the heart.
- Whenever possible, avoid going outside in inclement weather.
- Avoid walking on icy or snow covered areas.
- Look before you take a step or walk. Make sure the surface is cleared and dry.
- Wear shoes or boots with non-skid soles.

3. **CHECK YOUR DETECTORS.** Make sure you have working smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in your home. Whether burning a fire in your fireplace, using an electric or kerosene heater, or running your furnace, there is risk of fire or dangerous emissions.

Practical suggestions:

- Have your fireplace and chimney inspected by a professional.
- Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors as appropriate.
- Replace the batteries each spring and fall.
- Have an evacuation plan in place and practice it just in case.

IN THE NEWS

2008 Cost of Living Adjustments

Did you know that in 2007, almost 50 million Americans will receive over \$585 billion in Social Security benefits? According to the Social Security Administration, the cost of living adjustment for 2008 is 2.3%. The adjustment affects the over 54 million Americans receiving benefits. The typical retired worker will receive a \$24 per month increase to his or her award payment bringing the average total monthly Social Security award payment to \$1,068. The typically retired couple will receive a total of \$1,752 per month, an increase of \$39.

You might be surprised to know: “Social Security is the major source of income for most of the elderly.

- Nine out of ten individuals age 65 and older receive Social Security benefits.
- Social Security benefits represent 41% of the income of the elderly.
- Among elderly Social Security beneficiaries, 54% of married couples and 74% of unmarried persons receive 50% or more of their income from Social Security.
- Among elderly Social Security beneficiaries, 21% of married couples and about 43% of unmarried persons rely on Social Security for 91% or more of their income.”

Source: Social Security Administration

Medicare Reimbursements to Physicians Down 10% in 2008

Did you know that for the first time since 2002, Medicare will reimburse doctors who treat the elderly and disabled 10% less than in 2007? That is according to a federal rule released on November 1st. The affects of the cuts are not yet know but experts expect many doctors to stop accepting new Medicare patients.

CONTACT INFORMATION



THANK YOU!

Thank you to the many individuals and families we have had the pleasure to serve in 2007. We appreciate the opportunity to serve you and we thank you for the confidence you have in us. We strive to make a difference in the lives of the people we have the privilege serving. On behalf of the entire staff at Home Helpers, we wish you Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year!

HOME HELPERS – *Making Life Easier*[™]

Home Helpers' offers personalized care services similar to the care and support that is often provided by family members. We tailor our services and schedules to address our clients' needs. Home Helpers' experienced and compassionate caregivers are bonded, insured and thoroughly screened. To learn more about Home Helpers give us a call at 708-783-1220 or visit us on the web at www.MaryandMikeCare.com.



Serving the Western Suburbs of Chicago
Mary and Mike Doepke
Owners
708-783-1220
HomeHelpers1@comcast.net
www.MaryandMikeCare.com
