

November is Healthy Skin Month, a good time to remember some self-care tips. Lock in moisture by applying lotion or cream to damp skin after washing your face and taking a bath or shower. Need an easy, inexpensive way to care for very dry, rough, cracked skin? The American Academy of Dermatology recommends petroleum jelly for problem areas on feet, elbows and hands. Most important: Use sunscreen year round. Tell your health care provider about suspicious skin changes. Learn more at aad.org/public.



Holiday Dinner Tips

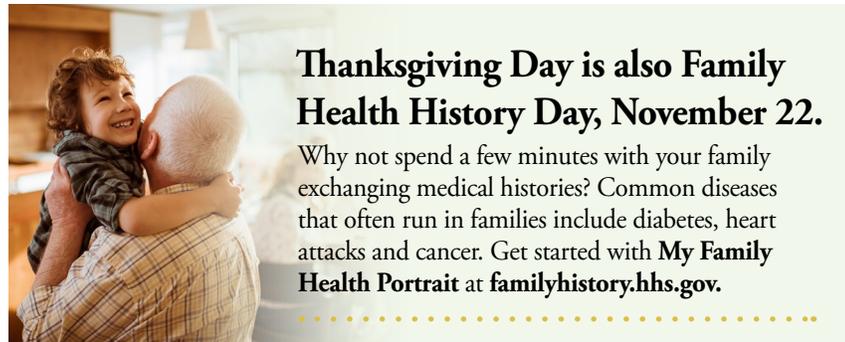
By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Sharing meals with friends and family is a special part of the festive holiday season. Here are 5 ways to minimize kitchen time, as you maximize people time.



- 1. Don't do all of the work yourself.** Invite guests to bring a dish and share the work. Even if they don't cook, guests can help by creating a fruit platter, bringing beverages or buying dessert.
- 2. Forget about fancy.** Trying chicken cordon bleu for the first time when you have 20 guests coming is not a good idea. Make your tried-and-true, well-loved recipes that you can pull off with ease. And make as much as you can in advance.
- 3. Prepare salad before and refrigerate it.** For a lettuce-based salad, add dressing just before serving. For a grain-based salad (e.g., pasta or quinoa), dress it in advance so the flavors have a chance to blend.
- 4. If you have a dish that must be cooked and served immediately,** measure and prep all of your ingredients in advance.
- 5. Know about likes and dislikes before you plan your menu.** Vegetarian guests? Any food allergies or intolerances? Avoid last-minute cooking: When you invite guests, ask about preferences.

Gather the special people in your life and enjoy more socializing and less cooking.



Thanksgiving Day is also Family Health History Day, November 22.

Why not spend a few minutes with your family exchanging medical histories? Common diseases that often run in families include diabetes, heart attacks and cancer. Get started with **My Family Health Portrait** at familyhistory.hhs.gov.

“Your positive action combined with positive thinking results in success.” — Shiv Khera



Do You Need That EKG?

An EKG (electrocardiogram) is a painless test that uses sensors placed on the skin over your chest. It can detect how long an electrical wave moves from one part of your heart to another, and whether the speed is normal, slow, too fast or irregular. EKGs can be performed at rest, while you exercise, or with a wearable device that records your heart's activity over days or weeks.

An EKG can help diagnose heart attacks, abnormal heart rhythms, heart failure and other cardiac problems. The test isn't always diagnostic by itself and can't be used to reliably predict your future heart health. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) doesn't recommend screening for heart disease with an EKG if you are at low risk for cardiovascular disorders.

Do you need an EKG if you have an intermediate or high risk for heart disease but have no symptoms and haven't been diagnosed with cardiovascular disease? The USPSTF states we can't know if the benefits of a screening EKG outweigh potential harms. Keep in mind that abnormal EKG findings sometimes lead to unnecessary invasive procedures and treatments.

Bottom line: Discuss whether you need EKG with your health care provider. Base your decision on your individual risk factors for heart disease: older age, male gender, smoking, high blood pressure, being overweight or obese, diabetes, high cholesterol and a personal or family history of heart disease.

Other reasons for having an EKG:

- You are preparing for surgery.
- You have possible heart-related symptoms such as chest pain, palpitations, breathing problems or unexplained fatigue.
- You have unusual heart sounds heard through a stethoscope.
- You take medications or have a device, such as a pacemaker, affecting your heart.



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