Hepatitis C Health: Ten Tips for the Holidays

December 21, 2015 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

The holiday frenzy is here. Hepatitis C and other chronic illnesses do not observe the calendar, but when winter sets in, our bodies want to slow down and rest, illness or no illness. Unfortunately, December tends to be busy. When we submit to holiday stress, we ignore our basic needs, a choice which doesn't help our health.
Coping with the holidays boils down to stress reduction. Here are some strategies to try:

1. Prioritize - Ask yourself what is truly important. If your health is at the top of the list, then you might need to find ways to keep yourself healthy.
2. Modify - Perhaps social engagements are important, but so is getting enough rest. Consider finding ways to do both, such as going to an event for a brief period of time or only going to events that revitalize you.
3. Let go - Many of us observe annual traditions associated with holidays. Sending cards is an example. Unless this is fun, consider not doing it. If decorating your home does not replenish your energy, then let it go. If you absolutely must do these things, simplify the activity. Perhaps send e-cards or reduce the number of cards you send. Instead of cooking, buy healthy, prepared food.
4. Simplify - The winter season is a time of bare necessity. Trees shed their leaves and the earth seems to sleep. You can follow suit.
5. Create new traditions - I have a friend who has created a December tradition of slowing down and taking a day off every week. She curls up with a book and takes naps in between pages.
6. Practice moderation - Let's face it, there are wonderful holiday temptations regarding food and drink. Develop strategies for coping with non-nutritious food and alcoholic beverages. Abstinence from alcohol is recommended for those with hepatitis C. Fortunately, this does not banish one to bread and water for an eternity. Hot tea and cider are very soothing. "Virgin" versions of popular mixed drinks can be satisfying. Try to eat healthy food prior to attending parties. If you do go to a party hungry, put healthy food on a plate and move away from the food. Choose one or two items that you really want and savor them.
7. Rest, rest, rest - Bears hibernate. Trees lose the weight of their leaves. Humans used to sleep much more prior to the introduction of electricity. It really helps.
8. Be creative - One way of being creative is to find the easiest ways to get things done. Ignore Martha Stewart. When you shop, take advantage of free gift-wrapping. Use the Web to shop. One of my favorite gifts is to donate the money to my favorite organization that I would otherwise be spending on something tangible. Any hepatitis or liver organization would appreciate the donation.
9. Move some and move often - Moderate exercise can be very therapeutic. A nice brisk walk even just for ten minutes can be very refreshing.
10. Ask for help - When we ask for help we are actually giving rather than receiving. First, it means we trust enough to take a risk. Second, it gives the person helping us a chance to give. Where would

we be in the world if we only gave and never received?

Remember that the holidays come every year. The goal is to stay healthy so you can be there every year to appreciate them.

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