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**Do Apples Used in Treats Maintain Their Value? C7**

**Holiday Loneliness:** Practicing gratitude can bring joy and help combat feelings of sadness. **C5**

**CPR:** Some common Christmas tunes are the right beats per minute to guide your CPR. **C6**

WELLNESS GOALS

## How to Keep Health in Mind Over the Holidays



Whether it's overeating, catching an illness or feeling stress or sheer exhaustion, a busy calendar of holiday festivities can take a toll on health, says Safia Debar, MBBS, a general practitioner and stress management expert at Mayo Clinic Healthcare in London. In this expert alert, Dr. Debar answers common questions and offers tips to help you power through holiday gatherings in good health. Whether it comes to eating, drinking or even the decision to hold or attend parties in the first place, mindfulness is key, Dr. Debar says.

**How can people protect themselves from catching an illness during this busy time?**

**1** Dr. Debar recommends considering the environment you will be in and how you are feeling physically and mentally heading into a particular gathering. Physically, do you feel rested? Are you getting the vitamins and minerals you need or should you top up by making a special effort to eat well? Have you taken preventive measures such as the flu vaccine? "It's also important to practice proper hand-washing, wear a mask if appropriate, and be conscious of what you're potentially exposing yourself to," Dr. Debar says. "Ensure healthy lifestyle factors are in place as best as they can be, given this time of year, but also have some self-compassion. It is a busy time. We are juggling a lot of dynamics. It's important to have some internal kindness for ourselves as well."

Poor hand hygiene, undercooked food and food left out too long are among the causes of foodborne illnesses. This is another area where a mindful approach can help you stay healthy, Dr. Debar says.

"This is where it's important to be conscious of the decisions we are making and questioning, 'Do I really want to go to the party? Do I have to go?'" she explains. "If something feels dodgy, be in touch with your intuition. If you're going to eat at the buffet, think about your choices. When you bring awareness to it, then you might decide you're not even hungry or you actually don't even want to be there. If you do go, make sure you're washing your hands."

**The party season is a time when people may indulge in sweet treats, fatty foods and alcoholic beverages. How can people avoid overdoing it?**

**2** If you are going to drink, stay hydrated with water, avoid drinking on an empty stomach, and be aware of what you're drinking and how it might affect you, Dr. Debar says.

"When you know what your individual reactions to drinks or late nights or indulgences are, then you can make sure that you rest the next day and put other strategies in place to help your health," Dr. Debar adds. "And try not to overcommit the next day as well; often it's when people have subsequent parties that it's a problem."

With food, try to avoid sugar highs, because that's when cravings can start. "If you can start your day right with adequate protein, good fats and avoiding a massive sugar spike, then you're not playing catch-up or at the mercy of sugar spikes. Maximize fruit, vegetables, protein and good fats and then the rest can be treats," Dr. Debar says.

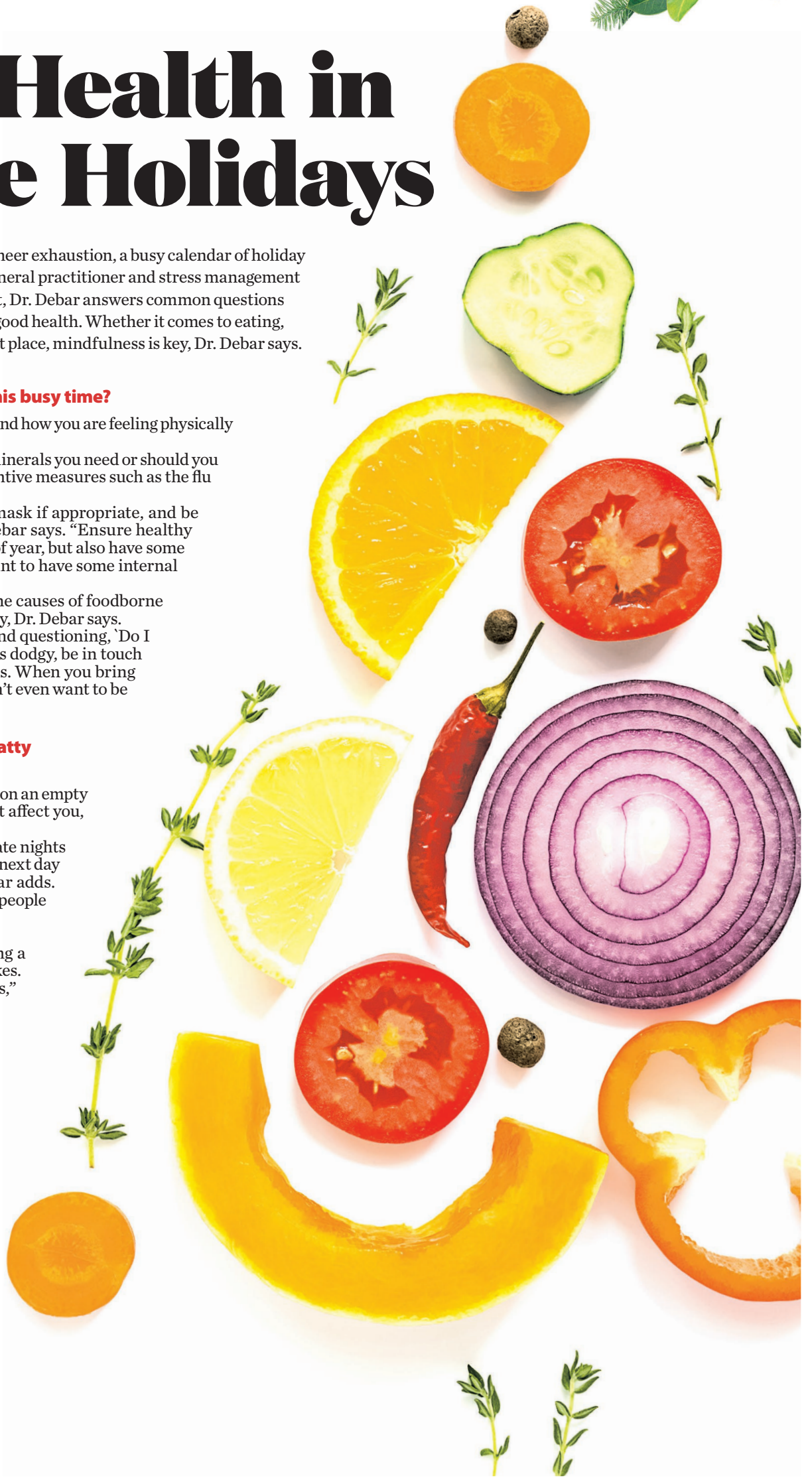
**For some people, social situations can cause anxiety. What steps can people take to calm themselves and enjoy the moment?**

**3** "This will really depend on the individual. Interactions are good for us. It's also a very good opportunity for people to step out of their comfort zone, but it can be dose-dependent," Dr. Debar says. "If you're an introvert, know your limits: How many events are you comfortable doing?"

Tell yourself that you only need to speak to one person, and promise yourself that you can leave early if you are not having fun, she advises. Relaxation methods such as breathing and visualization techniques can help ease anxiety, Dr. Debar says.

"Also, break it down into little manageable steps. For example, you're only going to a party for five minutes tonight," Dr. Debar says. "Then if it goes well, it increases your confidence, and then you're going to go for 10 minutes, and so on. Also, see if you can go with a friend. It's important to expose yourself to social situations because connection is really good for us and connection with like-minded people is actually a buffer of stress."

— Mayo Clinic News Network



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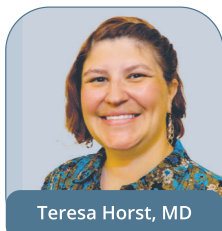
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