

a **better** u

# The 12 Ways to Christmas

Tips and hints to get you through  
the festive season



South Tyneside Council



North East and  
North Cumbria

# Spend Well

- How much do you have to spend? Make a list to help so you don't overspend. Pay in cash, it will help keep you in control. Let children see your careful planning, you'll be teaching them to spend well in the future.
- Don't overspend in the sales, remember it's only a bargain if you need it.
- If money is tight don't be afraid to tell your family. You can pick family names from a hat and give presents that way.
- **Remember – you can't buy love.** Don't feel guilty if you can't afford the latest present for your children. Your love and affection will last longer in their memory than any toy will.
- Try visiting local community shops or Christmas fayres to get reasonably priced gifts.
- Suggest to friends and family that everyone brings an item of food or drink to a festive get together. Everything can be shared and it will help to spread the cost for everyone.
- **Enjoy all the free things on offer** – the lights in the town, community get-togethers, playing family board games and festive walks.
- **Warning!** A Christmas loan is likely to come with high payback rates. There is lots of money/debt/benefits advice and support available from South Tyneside Council at [www.southtyneside.gov.uk/article/1468/Money-and-debt-advice](http://www.southtyneside.gov.uk/article/1468/Money-and-debt-advice)



# Keep Active

It's not easy keeping active during the dark nights and cold days and Christmas gives you the perfect excuse to curl-up and do nothing. Try:

**Sitting less....** break up your sitting time, it's so easy to sit and watch too much TV at Christmas, even a 10 minute move about during adverts will be better than nothing.

If you're able to, why not take advantage of the great parks, seafront and other outdoor spaces across the borough. Wrap up warm and stay active in the great outdoors!

## What should you do?

For a healthy body and mind aim to be active for around 150 minutes of medium exercise per week like sledging, snowball tag, walking, cycling - whatever makes you happy.

For those wanting a harder exercise you can do around 75 minutes of medium to hard exercise like making a snowman, clearing the snow from your path, going for a run, team sport.



# Stay Safe

- Welcoming Places are free public places where anyone can go to get warm and save money on their heating costs. They can also provide support and advice on lots of other things.

Find out more at **[www.southtyneside.gov.uk/welcomingplaces](http://www.southtyneside.gov.uk/welcomingplaces)**

- If you can, leave an indoor light on when you are out for a few hours or use a timer switch. Always lock all windows and doors.
- Turn a radio on to create low level noise, a battery radio will save on electricity.
- If you're going away over the holidays, don't share this on social media – you never know who is reading your posts.
- Ask someone you trust to watch over your house if you are planning to spend Christmas away from home.
- Keep gifts hidden from sight.
- Don't allow strangers to enter your home unless this is a planned appointment. Always check their I.D badge; ask safely from behind your door – if you are still unsure ask them to call back at a different time. Ask a friend to be with you when they come back. Beware of doorstep and online scams.
- Get home insurance – it might not be as expensive as you think, free online quotes are available.
- Check smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms are working. Only take out batteries when your replacing them.  
The fire service provide a virtual safe and well check at **[www.twfire.gov.uk/at-home/](http://www.twfire.gov.uk/at-home/)**  
You can call them for advice on **0191 444 1500**.





- Do not overload extension plugs with Christmas lights and don't leave on overnight.
- Never light candles near your Christmas tree or other decorations. Never leave them unattended or where children can reach them.
- Keep your house keys and mobile phone near you when you sleep in case of an emergency.
- Keep exits clear from clutter for an easy get out.
- Plan any journey in advance – pack emergency supplies in case of a breakdown or incident – snacks, phone battery charger, blankets, and extra layers to stay warm.

# Sleep

- Try to have a regular routine like going to bed and getting up at roughly the same time each day.
- Sleep only at night time. Try not to have day-time naps. Naps keep the problem going by making it harder for you to get to sleep at night.
- Make your bedroom a pleasant and relaxing place to be.
- Don't drink anything with caffeine after 4pm, have a soothing drink like camomile tea or a milky drink instead.
- Don't go to bed hungry but try not to eat a big spicy meal late in the evening.
- Avoid alcohol – it can help you fall asleep but you'll spend less time in a deep sleep, making you feel more tired.
- When in bed think calming thoughts – like five nice things that happened that day. They might be big or small, such as a good conversation, seeing the sunshine on your walk, or hearing nice music.
- Try a relaxed breathing exercise, one hand on stomach the other on your chest, slow your breathing, breathe deep into your stomach instead of high in your chest.
- If you can't sleep after 30 minutes, get up and do another activity. Try reading but avoid screen time.



# Connect

- Christmas is a good time to connect with family, friends, work colleagues, and neighbours, use your local community it's usually free. Develop connections which will support and make you happy in your everyday life.
- Relationships build a sense of belonging and self-worth. They allow us to share our feelings and know that we're understood, share positive experiences and give emotional support.
- Being around people with strong mental wellbeing can improve your own mental wellbeing.
- Arrange a day out with friends you haven't seen for a while.
- Switch off the TV and devices, play a game with the children, or just talk.
- Make the effort to phone people sometimes – it's all too easy to get into the habit of only ever texting, messaging or emailing people.
- Visit a friend, colleague or family member who needs support or company; this can improve your own mental wellbeing.
- Start a Whatsapp group to stay in touch with a group of people all at the same time. It's a great way of staying in touch if it's difficult to meet up face to face.
- Welcoming Places are free public places where anyone can go to stay warm, meet friends or new people, take part in activities or get advice. Find out more at [www.southtyneside.gov.uk/welcomingplaces](http://www.southtyneside.gov.uk/welcomingplaces)



# Keep Learning

- Try out some new recipes and cook some tasty healthy treats.
- Plan a Christmas fun quiz for friends and family.
- Play Christmas party games – more info at **[www.activityvillage.co.uk/christmas-party-games](http://www.activityvillage.co.uk/christmas-party-games)**
- Get crafty and make your own Christmas tree baubles and table decorations – more info at **[www.activityvillage.co.uk/christmas-crafts](http://www.activityvillage.co.uk/christmas-crafts)**
- Check out local museums and places of interest, they might be quiet while everyone is Christmas shopping more info at **[www.northeastmuseums.org.uk/](http://www.northeastmuseums.org.uk/)**
- You could learn about how different cultures celebrate Christmas. More info – **[www.whychristmas.com/cultures/](http://www.whychristmas.com/cultures/)**
- Explore your garden and local woodland areas to find seasonal plants and wildlife.



# Give



- Christmas can be a great time to give to others, not just gifts, but your personal time, which is more important and will mean a lot. There are many things you can give to others:
- Simply do something nice for a friend, relative or a stranger.
- Phone someone and thank them for being around.
- Volunteer your time to help others.
- You may find helping someone in need quite rewarding. You never know, your single act of kindness could change lives in more ways than you could ever know.
- Helping people in need sets a great example for your children, family, and friends.
- Check in on people who may be lonely like neighbours or older family members.
- Help a family member or friend how to use a mobile phone or tablet to get online if they don't know how.
- Showing compassion and kindness can really uplift a person when they are experiencing a rough time.
- The gift of a smile can go a long way.
- Be careful – avoid lending money to people, you may want to help but people may not be able to pay it back when they say they can.

# Eat Well

- It's reported we can eat as much as 6000 calories on Christmas day – wow! That's 3 times more than women should and over twice as much for men.
- Where possible keep the food blowouts to a minimum – for example your work/family Christmas party, Christmas day, and New Year's Day.
- The more food on offer..... the more we tend to eat so try sticking to a few smart choices rather than trying everything.
- Select the healthier items first, like veg sticks, healthy dips & salad. Steer clear of too many choices with pastry and breadcrumbs.
- Have a small healthy snack like cereal, fruit or low fat yogurt before your Christmas lunch/party so you are not feeling hungry, you're less likely to over eat on higher calorie foods at the main event.
- Drink plenty of water with your healthy snack. It also makes you feel less hungry.
- It's tempting to splurge on treats at Christmas but try to only buy what you need. This will reduce waste and save you money. There's lots of tips for how to reduce food waste at [www.lovefoodhatewaste.com](http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com)



# Stay in touch

- If you are on your own at Christmas, find something to do that will make you happy. Go for a walk or take part in community activities, see what events are happening in your area that suit you best. Explore new ways to meet people, in person or by joining online communities on sites like Facebook.



- Phone, video call, email, text or write to friends or relatives, or make use of social media to contact them. Maybe you are alone because you have turned down invitations. Call those people back and say "yes."
- Volunteering during the holidays is a way to connect with others and boost self-esteem. Consider offering to help serve dinner at a soup kitchen, take gifts to a children's ward in a hospital or visit residents at a nursing home.
- If being alone at Christmas is unavoidable, plan the day, treat yourself, cook your favourite foods and plan a film marathon, do something offbeat like learning a new language or starting work on the novel that's always been in your head. Christmas is a day to indulge in whatever makes you happy.
- If you are struggling, feeling down about being alone reach out for help. Call a friend, family member, or a helpline.
- You should never feel like you are lacking support. There are people who would love to hear from you and trained volunteers are there to listen.

The Samaritans are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. You can call them FREE on **116 123** or email **[jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)**

# Drink Sensibly

- Most people drink alcohol at safe levels and many don't drink at all. However if you're planning to go along to Christmas parties or socialising with friends you can plan ahead so you can stick within the safe drinking guidelines.
- It's recommended to drink no more than 14 units of alcohol a week, spread across 3 days or more. That's around 6 medium (175ml) glasses of wine, or 6 pints of 4% beer. There's no completely safe level of drinking but sticking within these guidelines lowers your risk of harming your health.
- If you are drinking alcohol, drink more slowly and drink with food, swapping every other drink for a soft drink or water helps limit the total amount of alcohol you drink in one occasion.
- Remember, drink plenty of water before you go to bed and keep more by your bedside to help with re-hydration through the night.
- Try to have at least a couple of days away from alcohol during a week and don't drink for at least 48 hours after drinking more than you usually would.
- Alcohol Change UK has a useful website and can help you check your drinking [www.alcoholchange.org.uk/alcohol-facts/interactive-tools/check-your-drinking](http://www.alcoholchange.org.uk/alcohol-facts/interactive-tools/check-your-drinking)
- South Tyneside's Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy Getting the Measure Right outlines the Council's commitment and strategy to tackling the problems caused by alcohol. More info [www.southtyneside.gov.uk/article/3116/Alcohol-Harm-Reduction-Strategy](http://www.southtyneside.gov.uk/article/3116/Alcohol-Harm-Reduction-Strategy)



# Take Notice

- We are sometimes so busy making plans, going from task-to-task, and one place to the next, we don't take time to reflect and take notice of the world around us.
- By taking notice and being in the moment, we can improve our mental health and sense of wellbeing.
- By being aware of the world around you, what you are feeling and reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters most to you.
- Be mindful: be more aware of the present moment, including your thoughts, feelings, your physical body and the world around you. Some people call this "mindfulness". It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges.
- Notice the changing seasons, If you're trying to solve a problem or come up with a brilliant idea, take a walk outside.
- Improve your mood and physical activity level, going outdoors for as little as five minutes may just improve how you're feeling. Spending time outdoors also helps with Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), sometimes called "winter depression." Outdoor light may help your mood even if it's cold and cloudy.



# Manage your mood

As we have said throughout this booklet, staying healthy, eating well, getting enough exercise and sleep, all help to deal with Christmas stress. Other tips to help include: -

## Dealing with family and friends

- Set some goals, don't stretch yourself too far and allow time to relax with family and friends rather than get caught up in shop until you drop!
- Put the kids, family and friends first but don't forget your own happiness and wellbeing.

## Dealing with the "Winter Blues" on cold dark days

- It can be hard to pull yourself out of bed but it is important to try. Being active becomes easier with practice.
- Take a time-out and go for walks and enjoy the outdoors.
- Have some fun with friends and family.
- Start that new hobby you always planned!
- Enjoy the moment and savour the world around you.
- If you start feeling stressed, try some breathing exercises. Count to 10 slowly to calm you down.

## If things get too hard for you to deal with

- Talk to trusted friends and family, don't bottle things up.
- Seek help from the professionals at one of the mental health and wellbeing services that are available. Or call the Samaritans free on **116123**

# Help us to help you

## Be wise, immunise this winter! Flu & COVID-19

Those at greater risk will need extra protection this winter.

- Flu and Covid-19 can be serious and even deadly for older adults, very young children and people with health conditions. The vaccines are the best defence we have. Make sure you get yours if you're eligible! Help protect you and your family. If you are offered both vaccines together it is safe to have them at the same time!
- To help prevent the spread of flu and Covid-19, catch coughs and sneezes in a tissue. Then throw the tissue away and wash your hands.
- If you think you have flu or Covid-19, stay at home and rest until you feel better. Call NHS 111 if you have an underlying health condition or feel really unwell.
- Ask your pharmacist what medicines should be in your cabinet to help you and your family this winter.
- Make sure you get your prescription medicines before your pharmacy or GP practice closes for holidays.



# Become a **better u**

## health and wellbeing champion



### We Need You!

Would you like to help your family, friends  
and local communities?

Can you share key advice and information to  
help people to improve their health, wellbeing  
and happiness?

We'd love you to join our champions team and help to  
improve the health and wellbeing of South Tyneside.

Sign up to be an a better u champion at  
**[www.southtyneside.gov.uk/abetteru](http://www.southtyneside.gov.uk/abetteru)**

✉ [abetteru@southtyneside.gov.uk](mailto:abetteru@southtyneside.gov.uk)

📘 @AbetterUsouthtyneside

📷 @Become\_AbetterU



South Tyneside Council



North East and  
North Cumbria

## **Festive Best**

There's a place in the north east of England  
Let me tell you, South Tyneside is its name,  
The beaches are one main attraction  
But it has other claims to its fame.

For some folk life's good and 'Oh, canny.'  
for others, the skies aren't so blue  
When they're asked 'are Y'alright, there?'  
'No problem!'  
They reply, but that's not always true.

Continue to have conversations  
Show people how you really are  
The future is never revealed, it's been said  
But the dark nights can show a dimmed star

It's alright to feel like there's no one  
That feels quite as stressed as your brain  
It's not always joyful or sparkly  
But without you it wouldn't be the same

So we wish you folks 'Merry Christmas  
and a happy new year to you all.'  
We'll meet up as friends for a cuppa,  
Let's look to the future- just call!!

**Helen, Sarah & Ian Drummond**



A Happy and Healthy Christmas From  
South Tyneside



Health and Wellbeing Champions Network



0191 424 7773



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