



Health & Safety



Stay sober, stay safe

In some areas, people are going to be visiting family and friends for the holidays, some for the first time since the Covid-19 crisis. It could be a time of love and exuberance, but don't let that interfere with common sense.

Drugged and drunk driving are deadly and the offenses will be enforced this year as any other.

Here are some ideas to stay safe:

- * Designate an alcohol and drug-free driver.
 - * Arrange alternate transportation to and from holiday events.
 - * Make sure you are well-rested.
- If driving long distances, take breaks to avoid fatigue.
- * Never use a cell phone – even hands-free – while behind the wheel.



Beware flu and Covid complications

Influenza has taken a back seat in headlines this year, but experts recommend that you get a flu shot nonetheless, including for a reason you might not be aware of -- your heart.

The Mayo Clinic says complications from the flu are more likely in people with heart disease. The Centers for Disease Control reviewed cases of 80,000 people diagnosed with the flu from 2010 to 2018. Of those, nearly 12 percent had a serious cardiovascular problem. The study was published in August.

According to Harvard Medical School, the body's immune response against the infection can trigger inflammation and other changes that harm the cardiovascular system. And because just 30 percent of people with the flu develop a fever, the infection can go unnoticed. The flu shot can help prevent infections and also reduce the risk of developing severe complications when infections do occur.



Covid plus flu

One unpleasant scenario: It is possible to get COVID-19 and the flu at the same time--a catastrophic and possibly lethal combination. Symptoms of both are much the same, but many COVID-19 patients report a loss of taste of smell.

A flu shot helps to avoid this double whammy.

Vitamin D deficiency

A variety of medical experts have noted that research shows high rates of vitamin D deficiency in people with severe COVID-19 infections. People with low vitamin D levels may be more susceptible to upper respiratory tract infections. According to Harvard Health Publishing, vitamin D may protect against COVID-19 in two ways: Helping to boost our bodies' natural defense against viruses and bacteria and potentially preventing an exaggerated inflammatory response.

If you suspect or know you have a vitamin D deficiency, experts recommend checking with your doctor about whether a supplement is a good idea.



Study: Gum disease affects whole body

Healthy gums make a healthy mouth, but diseased gums may create an unhealthy body, according to a new study.

According to researchers at the University of Toronto, oral disease could make all inflammatory conditions worse throughout the body. That would include diabetes, COVID-19, and even Alzheimer's disease.

Key immune cells, called neutrophils, go to work when the body senses infection or trauma.

Researchers found that an acute oral infection quickly creates a flood of neutrophil production, but not just in the mouth, according to the study, published in The Journal of Dental Research. Using animal and human models, researchers found elevated neutrophil counts in the bloodstream, colon, and bone marrow, as well as the mouth.

Festive assembly

Across

1. Feds' document producer
4. Glasses
9. PC linkup
10. Athletic shoe feature
11. Hall-of-Famer Mel
12. Come from behind
13. Female fowl
15. Northeasternmost st.
16. Song of praise
18. Tagged player
20. Beats it
23. Poet's "below"
25. Lithium-___ battery
26. Home on the range
27. Santa ___ winds
28. Forebodings
29. Lab or golden

Down

1. Hardly haute cuisine
2. Toast topping
3. Available
4. Braking sounds
5. Flat
6. Moray, e.g.
7. Storm preceder
8. Eye sore
14. Move quickly

1	2	3		4	5	6	7	8
9				10				
11				12				
13			14				15	
		16			17			
18	19		20				21	22
23		24				25		
26						27		
28						29		

17. Water nymph

18. Keen on

19. Abound

21. Like old recordings

22. Unforeseen difficulty

24. Gorilla

The headline is a clue to the answer in the diagonal.

[Click Here To Peek at Answers](#)

Amped-up neutrophils can cause cytokine storms, a severe immune reaction in which the body floods itself with cytokines. These are small proteins that have a host of different functions, but, in some cases, promote inflammation. This can make the person suffering from gum disease more likely to have poor outcomes from COVID-19 and can worsen other diseases.

Best advice: Brush daily, floss and visit a dentist to make sure your gums are healthy.



"No, we don't need to call the fire department."

400 years ago, Pilgrims' first Christmas wasn't exactly idyllic

Sixty-five days after setting off from England, the group of 100 travelers and their ship, the Mayflower, landed in what is now modern-day Plymouth, Mass., on Dec. 18, 1620.

The Mayflower was off-course, tossed by storms and angry seas and in need of supplies.

The travelers referred to themselves as pilgrims--people who go on a long journey for religious reasons. But these pilgrims did not find friendly inns to rest in for Christmas. They arrived to wilderness.



Nine days after their landing, some spent Christmas Day aboard the Mayflower, while others went to cut

trees to build their cabins.

Over time, the struggle of the Pilgrims became steeped in myth as their descendants re-imagined their holidays. One 1900 women's magazine article proposed the preposterous idea that the Puritans decked their ship with holly and ivy, wrapped gifts for indigenous children, and feasted.

In fact, the religious members of the voyage, the Puritans, rejected the celebration of Christmas as a holdover from Roman Catholic excesses in Europe. Their journals said simply that on Christmas they 'began to drink water' and then the ship's master offered some beer.

By 1621, the pilgrims certainly had not changed their attitude. According to their journals, some non-Puritan members of the community said they would not work on Christmas and began to play sports in the streets of the tiny village. The colony governor quickly put an end to those activities.

In an historical bah humbug, the Puritans went on to outlaw the celebration of Christmas in 1659. If you got caught having too much fun on Dec. 25, you were fined five shillings.

Scammers prey on payment app users

Peer-to-peer mobile payment services, like CashApp, Venmo and Zelle are portable, fast and allows users to avoid touching cash or handing cards -- a plus during the COVID-19 pandemic -- and pay for services or reimburse friends in an instant. Scammers are also hard at work innovating new ways to swipe our digital wallets. According to the New York Times, "fast fraud" is surging as more users turn to payment apps.

One common CashApp scam involves fake customer support numbers, according to Blackhawk Bank. Scammers list fake phone support numbers to gain access to devices and steal personal information. Scammers convince users to download screen-sharing apps to grant them access to devices. CashApp users should beware: the real CashApp does not offer phone support.

While Square (which owns CashApp), PayPal (which owns Venmo) and Zelle do not disclose fraud rates, experts believe Zelle to be the highest-security option because of its authentication requirements.



Water damage: It's more than just wet

The bathtub overflows. A storm drain backs up. A sewer line breaks.

All these emergencies involve water where it shouldn't be, but each is dramatically different in threat and response.

Water from sinks, rainwater or drinking water lines is a category one emergency. Since the source is sanitary, there is a low health risk if cleanup begins within 24 to 48 hours, according to Interstate Restoration.

However, gray waters from storm drains, flooding or equipment discharges carry an increased health risk. These category two emergencies may involve cloudy or clear waters that might smell.

Finally, category three waters from sewers, rivers, seawater or some flooding, may be dark or black, contain debris, and smell. These waters can be toxic and carry a high health risk.

Safety first

The initial response to all three categories should be to make sure building occupants are safe and away from affected areas. Next, assess if you can stop the source of flooding. For gray and black water flooding, stopping the water may be impossible.

When people are safe, decide what, if anything, can be saved: High-value items, computers and furnishings might be salvaged. Curtains can be tied up. Breakables should be removed to protect clean-up workers. Moisture-sensitive materials should be removed.

For gray and black water, professional restoration companies are required for cleanup, especially in the case of an office setting where health and safety codes apply.

In homes, where flooding is from sanitary sources, you'll want proper gear such as rubber boots and gloves to remove furnishings. If you have stopped the flooding, you have a day or two to start the drying process. Don't delay--even sanitary sources can become contaminated. Wet vacuums are good for removing water, but pumps may be needed for larger volumes. Resist the urge to open windows and turn off air conditioning. Air flow is key. Keep air conditioning or heating running at a mid-point that is neither cool nor warm. Fans, blowers and carpet dryers should be positioned in rooms to increase the rate of evaporation. The drying process may take up to five days.




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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2 National Mutt Day 	3	4	5
6 St. Nicholas Day	7	8	9	10	11 Hannukah 	12
13	14 Electors Meet	15 Christmas Bird Count 	16 Las Posadas Begins	17	18	19
20 Inauguration	21 Winter begins	22	23	24	25 Christmas Day	26 Boxing Day
27	28 Holy Innocents	29 Cold Moon	30	31		