

# Wellness News

December 2023

## This issue

- Self Care Tips for December
- Winter Antioxidants
- Holiday Financial Wellness
- Cranberry Spice Mocktail
- Socializing Safely This Season



***"December, being the last month of the year, cannot help but make us think of what is to come."*** — Fennel Hudson



**Anthem members:** You can view and manage your benefits, access wellness tools and resources to improve your overall wellbeing. Simply scan this QR code with your smartphone's camera to download the Sydney Health app.

*Tip: Anthem.com and Sydney Health use the same username and password!*

# Self Care Tips for December

The month of December often brings hustle and bustle as we celebrate various holidays and prepare to start a new year. This time of the year can sometimes lead us to complex feelings – excitement, stress, joy, worry, fear, hope, etc. You might notice yourself experiencing a combination of these emotions and need extra support. Check out these tips for making the month of December a little less overwhelming:

**Keep a gratitude journal.** Include things you're grateful for as well as things you accomplished each day. This gratitude mindset will help you stay mindful of the good things and positively impact your mood.

**Make a new holiday recipe.** Cookies, pies, breads, or anything else! Trying a new recipe will challenge you and keep your mind active. You might even end up finding a new favorite treat!

**Get creative.** Try your hand at poetry or painting. Creative expression and overall well-being are linked. These activities help you express yourself through art and keep your creativity flowing.

**Think of something you want to improve.** Maybe you want to pick back up the guitar or practice a foreign language that you haven't spoken in a while. Challenging yourself and finding success will feel rewarding!

**Show someone love.** Maybe it's been a while since you reached out to an old friend or loved one. Go out of your way to make someone feel seen and loved – it will make both of you feel better.

**Control your breathing.** If you're feeling stressed, try to calm down by using breathing exercises. Breathe in slowly for four seconds, hold for four seconds, breathe out for four seconds, and repeat.

**Find reasons to laugh.** Reminisce on some of your favorite family memories or watch your favorite comedy. Letting yourself have some good laughs will always lift your spirits.

**Celebrate some good news.** Some days it seems like the bad news never stops. Take some time to seek out good things that are happening in the world and avoid the bad news. This will give you more to celebrate and make you more hopeful.

**Watch your favorite movie.** Sometimes you just need to relax with something familiar. If you have a movie that you can quote the entire script of, sit down and simply enjoy watching it.

**Cross something off your to-do list.** We sometimes leave multiple responsibilities looming over our heads, especially during the holidays. Cross one thing off your to-do list, putting in the work now so you can relax later.

**Relax in your preferred way.** Whether you want to go out for a scenic drive or stay in for a warm bath, take time to just relax. This moment of peace will reenergize you and make holiday responsibilities easier to handle.

**Share a story of how you've overcome.** It feels good to celebrate the ways you've pressed on through life's challenges. Sharing these stories deepens connections with others and gives you a deeper appreciation of yourself.

**Remember that holiday stress will pass.** The holidays aren't everyone's favorite time. If that sounds like you, remember they'll be over as quickly as they came. If you need to sit them out and feel you can, that's okay.

**Prep for the week.** Getting ready for the week ahead of time will save you a lot of stress. Take time during the weekend to meal prep all your lunches or set aside what clothes you want to wear each day.

**Opt out.** You don't have to say yes to everything. Look at your schedule and see if there is anything you can skip. Prioritize the things that matter most.

**Practice restitution.** If you have an unresolved conflict with someone that's causing you stress, do what you need to settle it. If you're in the wrong, apologize sincerely. If they're in the wrong, do your best to forgive them.

**Go for a walk in nature.** Research shows that being in nature can increase energy levels, reduce depression and boost overall well-being. Take 30 minutes to walk outside and engage all your senses with your surroundings.

**Step outside your comfort zone.** When you try something new, you have the potential to find a new activity you love. Even if it's something that scares you, it will likely be worth trying.

**De-clutter your space.** Clutter can lead to stress. Spend some time cleaning up your space, even throwing away things you never use. You'll feel more at peace once you're done.





## Winter Antioxidants

When we talk about foods rich in antioxidants, all sorts of summer berries come to mind. Berries may be hard to come by in cooler months, but there are still plenty of winter foods full of antioxidants.

**Cranberries:** 'Tis the season of the mighty cranberry and you should eat these berries any way you can. Cranberries have long been thought to help in the prevention of urinary tract infections, but they may also offer some benefits to gastric ulcers and heart health, thanks to their high antioxidant content.

**Granny Smith Apples:** This apple is high in antioxidants and provides just slightly less than strawberries. Don't skip the skin, though. Antioxidants give color to foods, and the color of the apple is in the skin.

**Cinnamon:** Cinnamon has one of the highest antioxidant levels on the list and has an added bonus in that it may help you better regulate your blood-glucose levels.

**Butternut Squash:** High in fiber, butternut squash is also a useful source of vitamins and minerals. Diets high in brightly colored fruits and vegetables, like butternut squash, are rich sources of beta-carotene, which we convert to vitamin A in the body. This vitamin plays a key role in maintaining eye health and supporting our immune system.

**Beans:** Beans are a diverse group of legumes that are inexpensive and healthy. Beans are also one of the best vegetable sources of antioxidants. They also contain the antioxidant kaempferol, which has been linked to anticancer benefits in some studies.

**Pecans:** Considered on par with antioxidant superstars cherries and cranberries, pecans are a delightful way to increase your antioxidant intake. Naturally sweet, eating a moderate amount of nuts weekly lowers the risk of gaining weight. Just don't eat them in the form of pecan pie.

**Anthem members:** Be sure to check out healthy recipes as well as the **Nutrition Tracker** to unlock the power of intelligent nutrition through within our Sydney mobile app.





# Financial Wellness

## During the Holidays

One of the culprits of holiday stress is the unspoken financial commitment of family dinners, travel and chaotic gift-buying. Sometimes the stress is beyond your control, but there are some things you can champion like planning and budgeting.

### Set a gift budget

If money wasn't a thing, we could buy our loved ones anything they want or need. But money is a factor, so it's ideal to work within a budget, which means having a limit for how much you spend on gifts. You can also agree on a spending cap with your loved ones.

### Give secondhand gifts

It can feel taboo to give loved ones used gifts, but giving secondhand gifts is a cost-effective and eco friendly option. To give it a new feel, get nice packaging for the gift. If you're not sold on the idea of secondhand gifts, start with small, slightly used items like books.

### Take a break from spending in the new year

It's possible to spend more during the holidays than you do the rest of the year. Gifts aside, you could end up going out to dinner with friends more often or doing holiday activities with family. Spending more during the holidays isn't a terrible thing if you financially plan for it. To help you recover from large holiday expenses, consider minimizing spending a few months after the holidays.

### Don't feel pressure to buy gifts

While it is nice to give people gifts, it's not a necessity, especially if it's overwhelming or you can't afford it. Consider gifting a fun (and possible no cost) experience – we have some great ideas listed right on this page!

### Track Spending

When you're spending with multiple credit and debit cards, it's easy to lose track of how much you're charging. Consider using just one credit card and being mindful of how much you spend. Using a card that gives you cash back rewards can be a clever way to get some money back.

### Plan travel and gifts early

You don't have to wait until the holidays to start shopping. Consider buying gifts throughout the year. The same applies to travel – think about deciding who is spending the holidays where early in the year so tickets can be purchased while they are cheaper.

## Heartfelt free gift ideas

These touching gift ideas will be beloved by the people who love you most.

- Write down some wonderful moments with them and place them in a jar with a label like "Jar of Awesome."
- Write them some "just in case" letters to read when they are feeling blue, when they have something to celebrate, etc.
- Create a video tribute by compiling photos and asking family or friends to share their favorite memories
- Send a message to the future in a time capsule that can be opened at a later date, like for a child to open on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday or first Christmas living on their own.
- Plan a day of fun like taking your nephew on a tour of the best local playgrounds or treat a parent to a free art museum – memories are more treasured than a toy or a tie anyway.

## Almost free gift ideas

You may have materials already around your house—but if not, these handmade gifts will be low cost, but highly prized.

- Upcycle an old pasta sauce or other jar and layer in dry ingredients to make their own cookies, hot chocolate, or other favorite treat.
- Grow them a pretty plant, which always makes a lovely gift. Just remember you may need to start early!
- DIY some art supplies like play dough, slime, or even finger paints with ingredients you probably have at home right now.

# Cranberry Spice Mocktail

*Because a non-alcoholic holiday drink can be just as tasty as the boozy version!*

## Ingredients

- 1.5 oz sparkling water
- 2 oz cranberry juice
- 4 dashes Peychaud's Bitters
- 2.5 oz apple cider
- 10 cranberries  
(plus additional for garnish)
- Orange wedge

## Directions

Muddle cranberries and orange wedge in cranberry juice, and then pour in the rest of the ingredients and stir with a spoon. Garnish with cranberries and orange peel and serve on ice.



HAPPY  
*Holidays*

## Socialize Safely This Season

December is **National Impaired Driving Prevention Month**. Many of us look forward to celebrations during the holidays, yet it is also a time when some people are more likely to drink beyond their limits than at other times of the year. Some people will experience adverse consequences that range from fights to falls to traffic crashes.

### Before you celebrate – plan ahead!

Because individuals differ, the specific effects of alcohol on an individual will vary. But certain facts are clear—there's no way to make good decisions when you are intoxicated, and there's no way to sober up faster.

So, this holiday season, do not underestimate the effects of alcohol. Don't believe you can beat them, or they may beat you. Think before you drink.

### Here are some tips to keep in mind if you host a holiday gathering:

- Offer a variety of alcohol-free drinks—water, juices, sparkling sodas. Alcohol-free drinks help counteract the dehydrating effects of alcohol. Also, the other fluids may slow the rate of alcohol absorption into the body and reduce the peak alcohol concentration in the blood. They also provide your guests with alternatives to alcohol.
- Provide a variety of healthy foods and snacks. Food can slow the absorption of alcohol and reduce the peak level of alcohol in the body by about one-third. Food can also minimize stomach irritation and gastrointestinal distress the following day.
- Help your guests get home safely—use designated drivers and taxis. Anyone getting behind the wheel of a car should not have ingested any alcohol.
- If you are a parent, understand the underage drinking laws—and set a good example.

**Have a safe holiday season!**