



Press Release
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Stay Safe and Healthy This Holiday Season

Don't allow avoidable accidents to mar long-delayed time with loved ones.

PECOS, Texas (Dec. 20, 2021) – For most people, the holiday season is the most joyous time of year. After being deprived of festivities in 2020, there is no doubt mostly everyone is looking forward to spending an enjoyable holiday season with friends and family.

No matter how you choose to celebrate this year's holiday season, remember to keep safety first and maintain healthy habits.

“When it comes to the holidays, enjoying our time with loved ones is critical, but remember to do it safely,” says Brenda McKinney, CEO of Reeves County Hospital District (RCHD). “While COVID-19 and the flu continue to dominate national headlines, a bit of caution and common sense are still important for the best health outcome.”

To help residents navigate the holidays, McKinney has worked with the medical team at RCHD to compile top tips to promote health and safety over the next several weeks.

Stay COVID-Aware

While the Delta variant of COVID-19 continues to be the dominant strain in the U.S., the new Omicron strain is beginning to worry some health professionals. While much remains to be researched of the new variant, RCHD encourages everyone to take essential precautions to keep yourself and your loved ones safe this holiday season.

The use of face coverings when out in public are highly encouraged. Texans should talk with their healthcare provider about getting vaccinated against COVID-19. There are currently three different vaccines available, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) encourages everyone five years of age and older to get vaccinated.

Keeping a rapid at-home test kit on-hand is always ideal. According to McKinney, these test kits can provide a convenient way to ensure whether any coronavirus-related symptoms you or a loved one may experience are something to cause concern.

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Additionally, getting your annual influenza shot is urged by local healthcare professionals. The flu is highly contagious and can knock you down for up to two weeks, depending on the severity.

Keep your household safe

If you have an artificial Christmas tree, ensure it is labeled “fire-resistant” before placing lights and other electrical items on it. Remember to keep Christmas trees, whether natural or artificial, at least three feet away from fireplaces, radiators, and other heat sources.

The holidays also bring dangerous situations for children and poisonous plants. If your home has plants like mistletoe, holly bushes (with berries), and amaryllis, consider removing them or keeping them out of reach from children, especially infants and toddlers.

Fireplace safety

Fireplaces are a cozy way to warm your home during the cold winter months. If your home has a fireplace, remember always to use a screen to cover a burning fire to keep embers and flames from jumping out.

Keeping flammable materials at least three feet away from an open fire is highly recommended; this includes holiday stockings that may be hanging above a fireplace or gifts that may be placed near a fireplace. Most importantly, never leave a fireplace unattended. This includes leaving your home with the fireplace in use or going to sleep without first putting out the fire.

Keeping a fire extinguisher nearby is always recommended to help put out any fires that may occur in your household.

Cooking and dining safety

Before working with food, always wash your hands for at least 30 seconds before, after, and frequently while preparing meals.

Raw meat should always be stored away from other foods. When heating or cooking meals, a food thermometer is critical to ensure meats and dishes reach a safe internal temperature.

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Leftovers should rarely be kept longer than four days without extra preparation or precautions taken to ensure their longevity.

Travel safety

Every holiday brings an increased amount of travel, especially during the winter holiday season.

If you are traveling on the road, remember to ensure that you and all passengers wear a seat belt. Check local weather conditions for your route and adjust your speed accordingly, especially in wet, ice, and snowy conditions.

Remember to have a designated driver if you plan to drink alcohol if attending holiday parties. Know your limits and consider making alternate travel arrangements if necessary.

“Accidents happen, no matter how cautious we try to be,” McKinney explains. “If an unfortunate event occurs, and you require medical attention, rest assured that the RCHD emergency department will be open 24/7 to care for you and your loved ones.”

In the event of a medical or fire emergency, always call 9-1-1.

To learn more about local healthcare services and providers, visit www.reevescountyhospital.com.

About Reeves County Hospital District

Reeves County Hospital District (RCHD) provides healthcare services for people in Reeves County and neighboring communities in West Texas. Founded in 1954, RCHD, a Level IV Trauma Center, offers a wide variety of medical services, including emergency care, diagnostic radiology, physical therapy, general surgery, a clinical laboratory, and more. RCHD also operates American Home Health and Hospice and the Pecos Valley Rural Health Clinic, which offers family care, immunizations, and other medical services. For more information, please visit www.reevescountyhospital.com.

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