

## Navigating the Holidays While on Nutrition Support

The holidays can feel especially challenging when you're living with or managing nutrition support. It's easy to feel pressure to keep up with traditions, events, and expectations, but remember that the holiday season is about connection, not perfection.

Balancing medical routines with gatherings can be exhausting, so take one day, one event, and one decision at a time. Advocate for what you need and adjust plans to fit your comfort level. Your needs matter, and you deserve to feel included and supported. Give yourself permission to enjoy the people around you, focus on moments of joy, and let the positive parts of the season rise to the surface. Below are some additional tips designed to help.

### Plan Ahead: Supplies & Scheduling.

The festive season can bring a long to-do list, but getting your supplies and care shouldn't get lost in the mix. Before you get caught up in the hustle and bustle, here are a few things to remember to prevent last-minute stress.

- **Order supplies early.** Holiday shipping can take longer than usual due to increased demand and reduced holiday hours. Keep track of your supplies and schedule refills in advance. Work with your medical supplier to confirm delivery timelines and ensure your supplies get to you on time.
- **Ask about holiday hours.** Clinics, home health groups, pharmacies, and medical suppliers may close for the holidays or have reduced schedules. Ask in advance to ensure you have enough supplies, refills, nursing visits, and medications to get through the holiday period.
- **Have an emergency plan.** Ask who to call for supply issues or medical concerns after hours or on holidays. Keep these key contacts on hand for quick reference.
- **Organize a kit for when you are on the go.** Keep essentials ready for outings—batteries, chargers, spare tubing, clamps, syringes, wipes, etc. Being prepared reduces stress when you're on the go.
- **Traveling this Holiday Season?** Coordinate your travel and holiday plans with your healthcare team and medical supplier as early as possible. And check out additional travel resources and tips from the Oley Foundation here: <https://oley.org/page/TravelTipsHomePEN>



### Rethink Gatherings & Traditions

While gathering with friends and family can bring lots of joy, it may be stressful for others. Holidays often center around food, which can make social events emotionally complicated when you rely on tube feeding or parenteral (IV) nutrition. Consider the following to help with planning.

- **Communicate with hosts ahead of time.** Most people want to support you—they may just be unsure how. Share what you need and what would help you feel included, ask questions, and express concerns and suggestions for planning.
- **Create new traditions.** Food is interwoven into many traditions, and there can be a real sense of loss when you can't fully participate. This year, consider creating new traditions. Bring a modified version of a dish or beverage you can tolerate or if food-focused activities are difficult or not feasible, try alternatives: decorating, crafting, light displays, seasonal music, holiday movies, game night, or volunteering for a cause you care about. Get creative and make the holidays your own.



- **Focus on connection.** It can be lonely to be the only one not eating or unable to eat certain holiday foods. Your feelings are valid. Allow space for these feelings but also remind yourself that you were invited because of who you are, not how much you eat.
- **Plans may change—and that's okay.** Being on nutrition support sometimes means canceling, staying home, or celebrating differently. There are no rules for how a holiday “should” look. Celebrate in ways that feel good to you



## Be Kind to Yourself

The holiday season can feel overwhelming. Know your limits, both physically and emotionally, and remember that setting boundaries is a form of self-care. Below are some additional wellness strategies to keep in mind for the holidays

- **Honor your care routine.** It's easy to miss or run behind on meals/feeds, hydration, or medications when schedules shift and we become busy. It's important to follow your care routine and to stay on top of your nutrition and hydration. Set reminders if helpful. If you eat orally, bring safe snacks and drinks so you don't get caught somewhere without options.
- **Don't overextend yourself.** Set realistic expectations for yourself. You don't have to attend every event or keep every tradition. Plan time to rest and prioritize what brings you joy. If in doubt, consult your healthcare provider about what is safe and reasonable for you this holiday season.
- **Set communication boundaries.** Uncomfortable questions or moments may arise. Decide ahead of time what you're comfortable sharing and where you draw the line. Stay true to your boundaries and prepare some simple responses ahead of time that focus on your needs.
- **Give yourself grace.** Holidays can amplify grief, loss, and other mixed emotions. You're allowed to feel more than one thing at the same time—joy and sadness can coexist. Allow yourself the time and space to process and feel. Consider emotional outlets—meditate, journal, or breathe deeply. Remember you are doing your best and your best is enough.
- **Gifts are not the point.** Some people on nutrition support may be unable to work or may experience financial strain from medical costs. You don't owe anyone an explanation. Your presence—not presents—is what matters. Handmade or simple gifts are meaningful but remember that it's okay if you can't bring a gift at all. Shared moments matter more.



## Final Reminder

You deserve to enjoy the holidays in a way that supports your health, wellness, and peace. Honor your needs. Protect your joy. Celebrate your way.

Adapted from the *Lifeline Letter* article, “Untangling the Holidays while on Nutrition Support” by Emily Hoopes

## About Oley

The Oley Foundation is a non-profit organization that advocates for and represents the home nutrition therapy community. Our vision is to create a world where those on IV nutrition and tube feeding are united, supported, and empowered to successfully manage and thrive on home nutrition support. We believe in inclusivity and value the collaboration of patients, caregivers, and healthcare professionals. Your participation and contributions help make Oley a unifying platform for sharing best practices and providing patient-centered care. To learn more about our initiatives and opportunities to get involved or to make a donation, visit [www.oley.org](http://www.oley.org).

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