happier holidays
THREE WAYS TO MAKE THE SEASON BRIGHT SEE PAGE 4.

DIRTY DUCKIES
Keep bath toys clean

FUR-EVER FRIENDS
Animals can promote health
family meals offer benefits for kids

Eating together as a family may offer more than just a chance to catch up on the day. One study found that family meals may benefit kids’ overall health and development.

The researchers looked at the dining habits of nearly 1,500 6-year-olds and their families. When they checked in again at age 10, the kids who shared regular family meals were more fit overall, drank less soda and had fewer behavioral issues. The researchers believe these early family interactions set the stage for better social development in kids.

Fitting family meals into your busy schedules can be hard, so try these tips:
• Soups, stews and casseroles make great leftovers. Double the recipe and freeze the extras for a fast meal later that week.
• Whip up a one-pan stir-fry with lots of vegetables. Use vegetable stock or a small amount of oil for flavor. You’ll save on time because you don’t have to preheat the oven or do a lot of dishes.

To get the most from family meals, invite your kids to help plan and prepare them. When the table’s set, turn off the TV and concentrate on catching up.

could selfies harm your teen’s mental well-being?

Selfies aren’t just a convenient way to capture a moment. Editing images before sharing on social media may contribute to low self-esteem and body dysmorphic disorder, reports research published in JAMA Facial Plastic Surgery. Increasingly, patients are opting for plastic surgery to look better in selfies or appear more like filtered versions of themselves — known as “Snapchat dysmorphia.”

Edited selfies create a mental rift with reality because you may expect to look that way in real life, experts say. Teens bear the brunt of this experience since they’re more likely to internalize these unrealistic beauty standards. If your teen seems preoccupied with his or her appearance and it’s interfering with work, school and other activities, talk with your child’s doctor. If you need help finding a doctor for your child, call 800-825-KIDS today.

cardboard-roll snowman

No snow? No problem. Happy is … building a wintry friend using a leftover cardboard tube from toilet paper or paper towels.
1. Cover the tube with white construction paper. Glue it on with a glue stick.
2. Use craft glue to stick on black pom-poms for buttons. Also add googly eyes and an orange pom-pom for the nose.
3. Use a thin black marker to draw on a mouth. Make the face as silly — or as serious — as you want!
4. Poke holes on the sides of the tube with a pin. Get two small twigs from outside. Stick them in the pinholes to give your new buddy arms.
5. Put the snowman on display on a table or mantle. Then think about making him or her some friends!
furry friends

ANIMALS AID KIDS’ HEALTH

Playing with therapy animals, or even taking care of the family pet, can help children deal with a surprising range of health issues. Here are four ways research says interactions with animals can benefit children.

1. Reduced asthma rates among inner-city kids.
2. Improved attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) symptoms.
3. Increased control over type 1 diabetes.

CARE FIT FOR A KID

Healthy is … primary care just for kids. Find it by calling 800-872-1212 or visiting Iluch.org.
The holidays are supposed to be a time for smiling families to gather around a perfectly set table. In these mythical families, the babies never cry, the teenagers never sulk and the grown-ups never argue. In reality, we all know families are more complicated than that.

But even if your holiday gatherings aren’t picture perfect, you can take steps to make the season merrier — and more meaningful. Here’s how.

Get everyone ready to socialize.
Chances are the holidays will bring you together with relatives you don’t often see during the rest of the year. Your children’s social skills may be put to the test as they interact with large numbers of people — often after traveling, missed bedtimes and eating too many sugary sweets, when they aren’t inclined to be on their best behavior.

Teaching children manners and respect is a difficult but essential parenting challenge. Start preparing your kids for interacting at the holidays ahead of time. Talk about why politeness and respect are important. Even if they don’t love the bunny pajamas from Aunt Betty, explain why it’s important to say “thank you” for gifts and keep their comments positive.

If your child misbehaves, your response is an opportunity to teach important lessons about respect, manners and self-control. If your toddler or young child has a tantrum, encourage them to use their words. Foster communication by asking your child to calmly tell you what’s the matter, instead of just telling him or her to be quiet.

To avert meltdowns, stick with young kids’ usual routine for naps and bedtime. To simplify the schedule, consider visiting different branches of the family on different holidays or in alternate years.

And if the kids — or the grown-ups — aren’t always on their best behavior, that’s OK. Embrace the imperfections that give your family its unique personality.

Help your kids disconnect.
Screens are everywhere nowadays. From cellphones and televisions to laptops and tablets, it seems that everyone is glued to one, including kids. Besides being a distraction, too much time with these media can have harmful health and learning effects on kids and teens, including obesity, sleep problems, and delays in language and social development.

Set some limits on the use of electronics during the holidays. Turn off the television during your gatherings and don’t allow texting or web browsing during family mealtimes. Also set a rule for no screens one hour before bedtime to help make sure kids get enough sleep after the excitement of your celebrations. Be sure to set a good example. Kids won’t follow rules unless you obey them yourself.

Consider fun group activities to replace playing video games and watching YouTube videos. Some activities you can do as a family include:
- Taking a walk.
- Ice skating or sledding.
- Baking cookies or making decorations.
- Reading holiday stories.
- Playing board games.

Make a point of repeating some favorite activities year after year. These kinds of family traditions are the glue that helps bond family members together.
Do good together.
Helping others is a great way to spend time together and bring your family closer during the holidays. Volunteering also can help young people learn kindness and compassion.

What’s more, helping others can be fun for everyone in your family. Here are some activities you can do together:
• Have each family member pick out a toy. Wrap the toys together and drop them in a collection box.
• Honor loved ones you miss during the holiday season by giving to their favorite charity. Take the opportunity to talk about old memories — and create new ones.
• Invite a few lonely neighbors to join your family at a holiday concert.
• Decorate some wreaths together and deliver them to community organizations.
• Call your local senior center to ask how your family could help with crafts or join in the center’s holiday sing-along.

SET LIMITS
Encourage the family to engage with your tech-obsessed kids.

GET INVOLVED
Happy is ... bringing joy to others. Learn about volunteering or making a toy donation to Loma Linda University Health by calling 877-558-6248, or visit GiveVision2020.org to support a new state-of-the-art children’s hospital.
With more than 8,000 heart surgeries under his belt, it’s hard to believe Anees Razzouk, MD, a cardiothoracic surgeon at Loma Linda University Children’s Health, didn’t always know he was going to have a successful career as a surgeon. Growing up in Lebanon, Dr. Razzouk’s passion was teaching math, in which he was pursuing a PhD. However, life circumstances as a young adult brought him to California, where his career path changed.

**BECOMING A SURGEON**
Dr. Razzouk completed much of his medical education and training at Loma Linda University Health and for 35 years has remained a part of the organization because of its mission and long-standing history of excellence in cardiac services.

“The influence of Loma Linda University Health reaches beyond the shores to other institutions,” Dr. Razzouk said. “I have been very fortunate over the years to be a part of this team of specialists.”

Chair of the Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery since 2008, Dr. Razzouk has had the privilege to travel abroad with his colleagues and provide cardiac services to other countries, such as Burma, China, Malaysia and Syria.

Dr. Razzouk prides himself on giving babies born with congenital heart disease hope for survival and a better quality of life. Congenital heart disease is the most common birth defect, affecting about 40,000 births per year in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“Every patient has unique needs and special circumstances,” Dr. Razzouk said. “At Loma Linda University Children’s Health, each patient gets a customized treatment plan and personalized care from all team members.”

**STILL A TEACHER**
Although Dr. Razzouk did not become the math professor he once thought he’d be, he has been blessed with the ability to follow his passion and educate residents and fellows who want to be the heart surgeons of the future. To those men and women, he advises always listening to and getting to know patients.

“You have to earn their trust,” he said. “You have to work on yourself to be the best at what you do. You’ve got to be more than average.”

Teaching families to be heart-healthy is also a priority for Dr. Razzouk. No matter what a child is going through, if they have a heart condition or not, he says the best thing adults, parents, grandparents and caregivers can do for kids is to set an example of healthful living.

“Provide an environment for children to feel safe and secure, and nurture them. A healthy mind is important for the body to be healthy,” he said. “Children are trusting, observant, and they are great learners. If we are good examples, they will pick up good habits.”

---

**SPECIALIZED SERVICES**
Healing is … the Pediatric Specialty Team Centers, providing cardiology services and other complex care to children with chronic, multisystem physical challenges.

Call 909-558-2617 to discover more.
We’ve all heard that rubber duckies make bath time lots of fun. But could they also make it toxic?
While there haven’t been many studies on the subject, parents have long suspected that bath toys are a haven for germs.
To see if these hunches from parents are supported by science, researchers from Switzerland and the United States took an in-depth look at bath toys to see what might be lurking inside. The findings are published in the journal Biofilms and Microbiomes. Unfortunately, the results weren’t good news for those who are awfully fond of rubber duckies.

A HAVEN FOR BACTERIA
The study found that there are up to 73 million bacteria cells per square centimeter on a typical bath toy.
The combination of flexible plastic materials and bathwater from the tap combine to create an environment for bacteria to grow. Bath toys are usually made from polyvinyl chloride (PVC) or silicone rubber. These flexible materials absorb organic matter. That makes them likely to develop biofilm — a thin, slimy film of bacteria.
Next, consider that a child’s bathwater may have all kinds of things floating in it, including urine, sweat, shampoo and soap. Those conditions create an even greater opportunity for biofilm to develop.

Of course, bacteria are everywhere, so researchers looked at whether the bacteria present are likely to do any damage. Eighty percent of the toys studied tested positive for a type of organism that can be harmful. Of the 19 toys that had been used by children in the course of their normal bathing activities, 11 had a fungus inside of them.

KEEP BATH PLAYTIME HEALTHY AND FUN
A possible risk from these toys comes from kids squeezing the water into their faces, researchers say, while noting that more research needs to be done. That may cause infections in the eyes or ears, make wounds worse or even contribute to stomach problems.
However, there are steps parents can take to keep bath time safe — and fun! — for their kids. Consider the following:
• Clean bath toys by boiling them.
• Remove toys from the tub and dry them off after use.
• Close the hole that allows water to squirt out of a toy.

NEED HELP FAST?
Healing is … Loma Linda University Children’s Health, offering expert care across a variety of specialties. Get a physician referral by calling 800-872-1212 or visiting lluch.org.
No matter where your child is on their health journey, at Loma Linda University Children’s Health, we are here to make sure that summer picnics and laughter rule. From well-check visits to hospital stays, our commitment to your child’s health and happiness will always remain our priority.

To learn more, please visit LLUCH.org.

HEALING. HEALTHY. HAPPY.