

New Year and holiday guidelines: Managing overeating, alcohol, and fireworks safely

The New Year holidays represent a period of significant changes in daily routines, often leading to disruptions in regular eating patterns. Festive celebrations frequently take place late in the evening and at night, with food intake being increased, energy-dense, and often nutritionally unbalanced. While these habits are usually perceived as temporary, their repeated occurrence over time can have significant negative effects on health.

During evening and nighttime hours, physiological metabolic activity, insulin sensitivity, and gastrointestinal motility decrease. As a result, food intake during this period leads to increased metabolic load, impaired glycemic regulation (blood sugar control), and more pronounced energy storage in the form of fat.

Late and large meals are also associated with disrupted sleep quality, the occurrence of gastroesophageal reflux, digestive discomfort, feelings of heaviness, and abdominal bloating. In the long term, such habits are linked to an increased risk of obesity, cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, and other chronic non-communicable diseases.

To reduce the health risks associated with late eating during the New Year holidays, the Institute of Public Health provides the following public health recommendations:

PUBLIC HEALTH RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Plan the timing of your last meal so that the final main meal of the day is consumed at least 3–4 hours before going to bed. Keep in mind that during holiday celebrations, bedtime may be delayed, but late-night eating should not become a daily habit.
2. If the festive dinner is inevitably scheduled for late hours, adjust the composition of the meal and choose foods with lower energy content.
3. Limit the intake of fatty, fried, and heavily spiced foods during late meals, as these further burden the digestive system.
4. Avoid combining multiple high-calorie dishes in a single late meal to reduce metabolic and digestive load.
5. Pay attention to portion sizes during late meals, considering that the body's energy requirements decrease in the evening.
6. After consuming a late meal, avoid lying down immediately; allow time for initial digestion.
7. Whenever possible, engage in light physical activity after a late meal, such as a short walk, to support gastrointestinal function.
8. In the days between holiday celebrations, maintain a regular daily meal schedule to help stabilize metabolic rhythms.
9. Individuals with gastrointestinal, metabolic, or cardiovascular conditions should exercise particular caution regarding the timing and composition of evening meals.
10. After the holiday period, avoid continuing the habit of late-night eating to establish and maintain healthy and sustainable eating habits.

The timing of food intake is an important, yet often overlooked, aspect of a healthy diet. Aligning meals with the body's biological rhythms is a key step in preventing non-communicable diseases and maintaining health during the holiday season.

New Year celebrations are traditionally associated with increased alcohol consumption. To protect individual health and public safety, the Institute of Public Health provides the following public health recommendations:

Alcohol Consumption

Moderation and Self-Control

Consume alcohol in moderate amounts.

Avoid rapid or excessive drinking, which significantly increases the risk of injuries, poisoning, and acute health issues.

Never Drive Under the Influence

Even small amounts of alcohol reduce attention, reaction time, and judgment.

If consuming alcohol, arrange safe transportation in advance (taxi, public transport, or a sober driver).

Combine with Food and Water

Drink alcohol together with food, which can slow absorption and reduce negative effects.

Drink water regularly to prevent dehydration.

Caution with Medications

Alcohol can interact dangerously with many medications (sedatives, analgesics, antidepressants, etc.).

Individuals on medication should avoid or strictly limit alcohol intake.

Special Protection for Vulnerable Groups

Pregnant women, minors, and individuals with chronic diseases should not consume alcohol.

Encourage an environment free of peer pressure to drink, especially for those who avoid alcohol for health or personal reasons.

Recognize Risky Conditions

If symptoms such as loss of consciousness, vomiting, confusion, or breathing problems occur, seek medical help immediately.

Never leave a person alone while intoxicated.

During New Year celebrations, the use of firecrackers and pyrotechnic devices poses serious risks to health and safety. To prevent injuries and undesired consequences, the Institute of Public Health recommends:

Avoid Use by Children and Minors

Firecrackers and pyrotechnics must not be used by children or minors.

Parents and guardians play a crucial role in supervision and managing risks.

Never Handle Pyrotechnics Under the Influence

Alcohol and other psychoactive substances significantly increase the risk of accidents and improper use.

Handling Malfunctioning or Unexploded Fireworks

Never attempt to re-ignite a firework that failed to explode.

Wait and safely remove it according to instructions.

Protect Health and the Environment

Noise from fireworks can cause stress, anxiety, and hearing damage, especially in children, older adults, and pets.

Consider alternative ways to celebrate without loud noises.

Emergency Situations

In case of injuries (burns, eye, hand, or facial injuries), seek medical help immediately.

In case of fire, notify the relevant authorities immediately.

These measures are intended to ensure a safe, healthy, and enjoyable holiday season for everyone.