

Don't Shop 'Til You Drop This Holiday Season



by the [American Chiropractic Association](#)

The holidays seem to come earlier and earlier every year -- and along with them, the stresses and strains of frenzied holiday shopping. Take a stroll through your local mall, and you'll already see symbols of the approaching holiday season -- from Thanksgiving and Christmas decorations to notices of blowout sales. As your muscles tense with each passing day, the American Chiropractic Association (ACA) asks, "Are you ready for the holiday shopping challenge?"

"Our bodies have the capacity to do a little more than we normally do," says Dr. Scott Bautch, past president of the ACA's Council on Occupational Health. "But our bodies do not adapt very well to doing a lot more than we normally do. Since the added demands of this season can stress the capacity of our bodies, we need to do everything we can to help ourselves. Eat right, drink plenty of water, stretch, exercise and take a few minutes to slow down and reflect on what the season is all about."

So relax and enjoy the holidays! Dr. Bautch and the ACA encourage you to consider the following tips to help keep you and your loved ones healthy, happy and safe this season.

Treat Holiday Shopping As An Athletic Event

- Stay hydrated! Drink eight to ten 8-ounce glasses of water a day. (Coffee, tea, soft drinks and alcohol are dehydrators. Don't substitute them for water.) On shopping days, you may need to drink even more water.
- Be sure to stretch before and after a long day of shopping. When you are stressed-out, your muscles are less flexible than usual.
- Wear shoes with plenty of cushioning in the soles to absorb the impact of walking on those hard shopping mall floors.
- Make sure your clothing is as comfortable as possible. It's a good idea to wear layers, because you may be going from a cold environment (outdoors) to a warm environment (indoors).
- Leave your purse at home. Wear a light fanny pack, or if necessary, a light backpack instead. Pack only those items that are absolutely essential (driver's license, credit card, etc.).
- If you start to feel some pain, nip it in the bud. Apply an ice bag to the affected area for 20 minutes, then take it off for a couple of hours. Repeat a couple of times each day over the next day or two.



"During the holiday season, we're running at absolute maximum capacity, which can lead to stress and even depression," says Dr. Bautch. "We need to stretch and stay hydrated to increase our capacity, so we are not overwhelmed by the activities of the season."

Plan Frequent Breaks Into Your Shopping Day



- During a day of heavy shopping, most people should take a break every 45 minutes. Those with less stamina may even need to take breaks more frequently.
 - If possible, obtain a locker. Lockers can help cut down dramatically on how much you have to carry around. You can take a load off by scheduling trips to your locker into your breaks.
 - If your mall or shopping center doesn't offer lockers, try to plan trips to your car. Don't carry around more than is absolutely necessary at one time.
 - When taking breaks, try to eat light foods. A salad and some fruit is a much better option than a burger and fries.
- Skip the coffee break! Coffee and sodas contain caffeine and sugar, which add even more stress to your body. Pass on the designer coffee at the java stand and keep drinking water.

"We actually need to eat better than normal during the holiday season," explains Dr. Bautch. "On average, people gain five to six pounds during the holidays. And heart attacks occur more often during the holidays as well. Eating a heavy meal and then running out on an exhausting shopping trip can be very dangerous."

Shopping With Children

- If at all possible, DO NOT bring children along on a holiday shopping trip. Most children simply do not have the stamina for such an event, and you and your child will only become frustrated with one another. Don't add this type of stress to an already stressful situation.
- Try to split "child duty" up with a spouse or another parent. They'll watch your kids while you shop, and vice-versa.



"Shopping with children is just a bad idea," says Dr. Bautch. "If your hands are loaded with shopping bags, you may not be able to hold your child's hand, which could increase the chances he or she might wander away from you. Take whatever steps necessary to not have to bring your child along."



Wrapping Your Gifts



- Since there is no "ideal" position for wrapping gifts, the most important thing to remember is to vary your positions. For example, try standing at a table or countertop for one package, sitting on a bed for another, sitting in a comfortable chair for another, etc.
- Do not wrap packages while sitting on the floor. Wrapping packages while sitting on a hard floor can wreak havoc on your posture, and should be avoided.
- Always stretch before and after you wrap gifts.

"When wrapping presents, it's a good idea to 'stretch the opposites,'" says Dr. Bautch. "In other words, if you are leaning forward when wrapping your gifts, stretch backward when you are done."

