

Dreading the holidays?

With shorter days and longer to-do lists, the winter months often bring a unique set of mental health challenges. Then you add the COVID-19 pandemic in the mix. If you're constantly worrying about you and your loved ones' health, it might feel like your holiday plans are doomed. Remember, the holidays don't have to be perfect (they rarely are). Here are some things you can do to manage and even prevent feelings of depression:

- 1. Whatever you're feeling – acknowledge it.** If you've experienced loss this year or are grieving holiday traditions that can't happen, it's okay to feel sad. You're human.
- 2. Plan ahead for shopping, cooking and other activities.** If you stick to a schedule and a budget, you're less likely to feel overwhelmed by last-minute tasks.
- 3. Embrace new traditions.** As families change and grow, so do the holidays. Be open to creating new memories and celebrate in different ways.
- 4. Learn to say no.** You don't have to participate in every activity or virtual gathering you're invited to – especially if it impacts your mental health. It's okay to prioritize your well-being.
- 5. Ask for help.** If you're feeling constant sadness, trouble sleeping or anxiety despite your best efforts, talk to your doctor about seeing a mental health professional.

For additional support, call the number on your insurance card for a referral to a trained mental health professional or talk to your primary care doctor about your concerns.