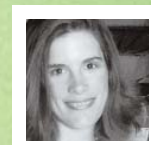
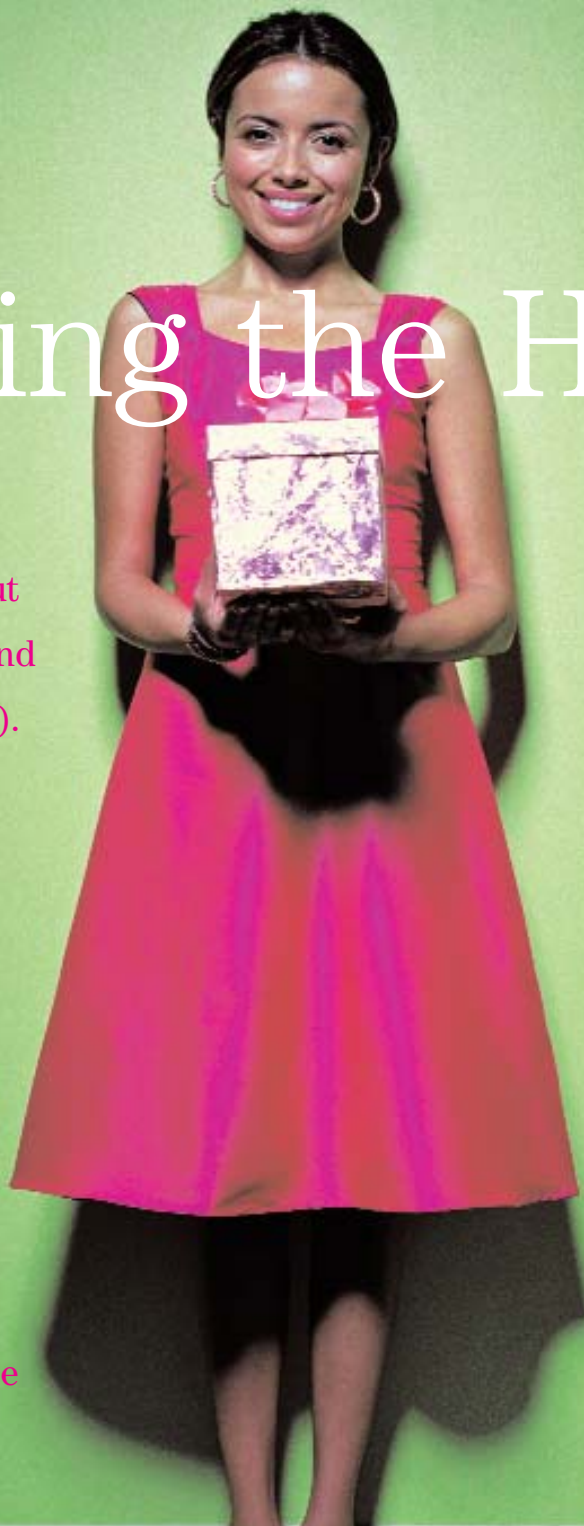


# Enjoying the Holidays

Special occasions and holidays should be about the fun, not the food (and certainly not about IBD). Being open and honest with yourself and with others close to you can help you to enjoy the holidays to their fullest. It's important that you know your own limits and respect them. Let common sense, intuition, and experience be your guide.



**Karen Guglielmo, Crohn's disease patient and Education Coordinator for CCFA's Gateway (Missouri) Chapter, has graciously agreed to provide some additional help by sharing some of her secrets for enjoying the holidays.**

It is quite natural for me to write about preparing for the holidays several months in advance, because that truly is when I start. As I write this, my holiday shopping is already sitting on my guest bed in a long row of shopping bags, gift receipts tucked neatly into each one, ready for wrapping. Nineteen years of managing Crohn's disease have taught me that there's no substitute for starting early.

**Prioritize.** Every year, I have more on my list than I know I can accomplish.

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The temptation is to run myself ragged because I feel the need to do everything, and that the holidays won't be perfect without an old-world, three-tiered, cream-frosted, snowman-shaped pound cake. But by making a list, you can be sure to accomplish what you most want to. Once I've made my holiday "wish list" of things I'd like to do (write 100 holiday cards, plan a cookie exchange, decorate the dog house, carol at an area nursing home, etc.), I place them in order of what **MUST** be done, and what I would **LIKE** to get done. This year, my holiday cards went out in July because I realized I wouldn't have time in December. Everyone gets greeting cards at holiday time, but think what a nice surprise "Christmas in July" was!

**Delegate, delegate, delegate.** Like many people, even though I list and prioritize, I still end up deciding most of my list items are necessary elements of our holiday celebration. After all, my 9-year-old niece likely wouldn't appreciate the gentle comedy of getting her holiday gift in March because it "didn't make the December cut." So I keep my niece happy, and myself out of the emergency room, by delegating some tasks. The thing that wears me out the most during the holidays is shopping, be it at the mall or at the grocery store. I simply get too fatigued, and spend the following two days pulling myself together with sports drinks and iron injections. To solve this problem I partner and negotiate with my husband to get things done. We have an agreement—I make the detailed list, and he does the shopping. This applies to gifts as well as holiday food. After all, didn't they invent the cell phone to help husbands get advice as to which brand of green bean makes the best

casserole? Use the technology at hand. Besides, we both agree that he would rather shop than write out holiday cards. Maybe you can find a similar arrangement.

**Remember what's important.** This mantra was something that came to me quite recently, when I was on a Caribbean cruise with my family. A week prior to our departure I experienced obstructive symptoms, and two days before we left my GI told me that I would need to be on a liquid diet for the duration of our cruise. I was devastated. After all, what is the definition of cruise but "to eat oneself into oblivion?" At dinner one night, I realized that once I decided that my happiness need not be dictated by what I could or could not eat, I began to enjoy myself. I realized that what was most important was that I was healthy enough to enjoy this time with my family. This applies equally at the holidays. So what if the garland isn't hanging perfectly or all the cookies don't get baked? What if the pie comes from the corner bakery instead of my oven, or there's a little more dust under the beds than I'd prefer?

**The most important thing is to do what it takes to be healthy, because everyone will agree that there is nothing more special at the holidays than a healthy YOU! ■**

#### **Some other thoughts for enjoying the holidays.**

Bring a dish to parties. This may feel a bit awkward, especially if you don't know your hosts well or don't want to tell them about your IBD, but it can be explained easily enough. Simply mention that you're on a medical diet. Most people will not press for further details.

Before heading out to parties or holiday get togethers, eat before you go, so you will not feel as tempted by foods that may not be right for you.

Keep a food diary just for special occasions. You will be able to look back to see what kinds of foods you were able to enjoy and be prepared for future occasions.