

# PUBLIC HEALTH CONNECTION



## The Holiday Blues

Winter has arrived, bringing with it holidays, colder weather, earlier sunsets and a broad spectrum of emotions and experiences. While most often associated with feelings of joy and togetherness, this time of year can also be a source of stress, sadness, loneliness, self-reflection and anxiety. These feelings are sometimes referred to as the “holiday blues.”

**Symptoms:** Common **temporary** symptoms of the holiday blues include: feelings of sadness, guilt, depressed mood; decreased interest in activities; becoming increasingly withdrawn, irritable, anxious; having difficulty sleeping, decreased appetite, and head or body aches. These typically last only until normal daily routines are resumed after the holidays.

**Causes:** The holiday blues can occur as a reaction to unrealistic holiday expectations, fatigue, financial stress, not being able to be with friends and family, feeling unable to cope with the additional demands of the holiday season, and changes in diet or daily routines. Having fewer coping skills and a limited support system, experiencing relationship issues, traumatic anniversaries, and pre-existing illnesses or health conditions increases the likelihood of having the holiday blues.

**Prevention:** Eating right, getting plenty of rest, exercising regularly; setting realistic goals and having realistic expectations for both yourself and for the holiday season; pacing yourself; making a list and prioritizing the activities; volunteering your time to help others; limiting alcohol consumption; trying new ways to celebrate; sharing the responsibilities of holiday tasks; keeping track of holiday spending; spending time with supportive people; and making time for yourself are all ways to avoid or lessen the impact of the holiday blues.

**Beyond the holiday blues:** If these symptoms persist beyond the holidays, this could indicate a more serious mental health concern. It is important to talk honestly with your doctor about your symptoms, and any questions or concerns that you may have. Your physician may refer you to a mental health professional for further evaluation and possible treatment. For more information on how to get connected to local physicians and mental health professionals, please contact the *Care for Kids* program at the Scott County Health Department at 563-328-4114.



### OUR MISSION:

The Scott County Health Department promotes, protects, and preserves health through leadership, services, education, and partnerships.

### OUR VISION:

Scott County—  
A safe and healthy  
community.



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

## SPECIAL EVENTS

- *Scott County Board of Health Meeting, Scott County Administrative Center, 1st Floor Boardroom, 12:00 PM, Thursday, December 17, 2015.*
- *Scott County Health Department will be closed Thursday, December 24th and Friday, December 25th in observance of the Christmas holiday.*

## Links

For more information about the holiday blues, visit:

[http://www.medicinenet.com/holiday\\_depression\\_and\\_stress/article.htm](http://www.medicinenet.com/holiday_depression_and_stress/article.htm)

To find out about various mental health conditions and available supportive resources, visit National Alliance on Mental Illness:

<http://www.nami.org/>

For more information on safe driving and winter safety, visit:

<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/safeDriving.html>

<http://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>

<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/>

To learn about World AIDS Day this December, visit

<http://www.worldaidsday.org>

If interested in healthy holiday recipes this winter, visit

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/hol>

## Safe Winter Driving

### The Three P's of Safe Winter Driving

Driving in the winter can be hazardous and frightening. By taking some additional preparations and precautions, you can help to ensure a safer trip. The three P's of safe winter driving are to PREPARE for the trip, PROTECT yourself and PREVENT crashes on the road. Prepare for winter weather by maintaining your car. Be sure to check your battery, tire tread, and windshield wipers. Keep your windows clear, put no-freeze fluid in the washer reservoir, and check your antifreeze. Always have the following items on hand: flashlight, jumper cables, abrasive material (sand, kitty litter or floor mats), shovel, snow brush and ice scraper, warning devices (like flares) and blankets. Planning your route ahead of time and practicing cold weather driving techniques during the daylight in an empty lot are other great ways to prepare. Protect yourself by buckling up and properly using child safety seats. Never place a rear-facing infant seat in front of an air bag. Children 12 and under are much safer in the back seat. Prevent crashes on the road by never mixing drugs and alcohol with driving. Slowing down, increasing distances between cars, keeping your eyes open for pedestrians walking in the road, and avoiding fatigue by getting plenty of rest before trips are helpful ways to prevent crashes on the road. Be safe this winter!

## Scott County Health Department

Scott County Administrative Center, 4th Floor

600 West 4th Street

Davenport, Iowa 52801-1030

Phone: 563-326-8618

Fax: 563-326-8774

E-mail: [health@scottcountyiowa.com](mailto:health@scottcountyiowa.com)

Web site: [www.scottcountyiowa.com/health](http://www.scottcountyiowa.com/health)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/scottcountyiowa](http://www.facebook.com/scottcountyiowa)



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