



# The Balancing Act

Winter 2009



## Holiday Food Safety Basics for Busy People!

By Wayne Coachman, Early County

### CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE:

*Roxie Booker  
Brooks County*

*Wayne Coachman  
Early County*

*Sandra Gay  
Stewart County*

*Rachel Hubbard  
Lanier County*

*Sylvia Davis  
Baker County*

*Editor:  
Sylvia V. Davis  
Baker County*



The holidays are here and they are supposed to be happy, right? OK let's see you are working full time, cleaning the house, doing the shopping, preparing for a trip, In-Laws are coming to visit, kids are fighting, dog is barking and the list goes on and on. We all want our holiday celebrations to be fun, easy, tasty and safe. The Partnership for Food Safety along with [HolidayFoodSafety.com](http://HolidayFoodSafety.com) has a few basic tips for holiday food safety.

The Partnership for Food Safety Education emphasizes the four basic home practices for food to be safe: Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill. Consistent practice in these four basic areas is important to your family health.

**Clean** – Wash hands and surfaces often. Foodborne bacteria cannot be seen, tasted or smelled, but can spread throughout the kitchen and onto cutting boards, utensils countertops and food.

**Wash hands** with warm water and soap at least 20 seconds before and after handling food. Also keep your scene clean by washing cutting boards, dishes, utensils and countertops with hot soapy water after preparing each food and before going to the next food or dish.

**Separate** – Get it straight – it's safe to separate. Cross-contamination is how bacteria can be spread. Improper handling of raw meat, poultry and seafood can create an inviting environment for cross-contamination. Always wash hands, use separate cutting boards and clean plates and utensils. Separate raw meat, poultry and seafood from other foods in shopping cart, bags and in the refrigerator.

**Cook** - Cook food to a safe temperature. Cooking food safely is a matter of degrees. Food are properly cooked when they reach a high enough internal tempera-

ture to kill the bacteria that causes foodborne illness as measured with a food thermometer. Refer to a Safe Cooking Temperature Guide for correct food internal temperature. After food is properly cooked keep food hot with chafing dishes, slow cookers and warming trays. Keep containers closed until serving time.

**Chill** – Chill or refrigerate food promptly and properly at 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below is one of the most effective ways to reduce risk of foodborne illness. Refrigerate or freeze perishable, prepared foods and leftovers within two hours of purchase or use.

For more information and free home downloads on Safe – kitchen, turkey and leftover, Fun – recipes and activities for kids, Easy – organizers and shopping lists and Tasty – menus, recipes and more go to [www.HolidayFoodSafety.org](http://www.HolidayFoodSafety.org).

## Boost Your Immunity, by Rachel Hubbard, Lanier

Are you paranoid to step outside for fear of catching a cold? Here are some tips on steps you can take to boost your immune system.

The body's immune system is present to help prevent and fight off illness and infection. If our immune system is not at working at it's best, we can get sick more easily. We can enhance our immune systems through good lifestyle choices.

One way to enhance the immune system is by reducing stress. Everybody has some level of stress in their lives.

This stress has been proven to suppress the immune system, which allows more illness. To reduce stress, you should exercise at least 15 minutes a day, and get 8 hours of sleep every night.

The foods we choose to eat also affect our health. If we don't have enough protein in our diets, we increase our risk of infection. Yet we can get protein from a variety of sources including, meat, fish, poultry, milk and dairy products, legumes, nuts, seeds, and grains.

Have you ever heard the word "ANTIOXIDANT"? Well, these antioxidants help our immune systems by stopping and even repairing damage to cells in our bodies. Examples of these are Vitamin E, Vitamin C, and Beta-carotene. Antioxidants can be found in nuts, fruits, and vegetables, especially those deep in color like spinach, squash, tomatoes, and greens.

There has been some debate about over the counter products that will prevent or lessen a cold. Vitamin C won't pre-

vent a cold, but it can reduce cold symptoms. Also, zinc acetate lozenges will reduce the length and severity of a cold.

If the foods we choose to eat follow MyPyramid, we will get the right amount of nutrients our body and immune system needs to keep us healthy during this cold season.





# Holiday Helpers by Roxie Booker, Brooks County

At this time of year you have many “helpers” who are not always that helpful. Children are often attracted to the shiny and pretty objects you put out for the holiday season. Your cats and dogs may see hanging light cords or a tree as an invitation to play.

As you decorate for the holidays, remember to keep your family and pets safe. If you put up lights, inspect the cords to make sure none of them are frayed or broken. Secure loose electrical cords out of the way, so people won't trip over them and pets can't chew on them. Always turn off the lights when you go to bed or leave your house.

If you are burning candles, remember to use good judgment and a bit of caution. Place candles in stable holders and in higher locations, away from curious children and nosy pets. If you like to have burning candles in your home, designate one family member to be the “Overseer of the Light.” The Overseer's job is to make sure all candles are extinguished when everyone goes to bed or leaves the house or apartment.

When you have a fire burning in the fireplace, keep a screen in front of it. This will protect your home from sparks and the possibility of a fire starting. It will also help keep children and pets from getting too close to the flames.

A few simple safety precautions will help protect your family this holiday season. For more tips on preventing a fire visit the U.S. Fire Administration website at: <http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/safety/tips/holiday.shtm>



## Feel Better with a Clean House By Sandra G. Gay, Stewart County



!Have you noticed that when your house is clean and in good order, you feel better? According to the 2006 Soap and Detergent Association Spring Cleaning Survey 98 percent of Americans feel better about themselves if their house is clean. A clean house, not only lifts your spirits, but improves your physical health by reducing the dust, dust mites, bugs, mold and other allergens that can lead to health problems.

The place to start with deep cleaning is clutter removal. Dust and bugs collect in areas with stacks of magazines, papers, clothes and boxes. Sort through your stacks of stuff and eliminate at least 75 percent of each pile. More is even better.

With the clutter gone, begin some cleaning to reduce the allergens in your home:

- Dust the fan blades and light fixtures.
- Clean all furniture, removing all items from shelves and table tops and dusting well before replacing them.
- Vacuum upholstered furniture. Consider having items professionally cleaned.
- Clean all vents in the house and replace the air filters.
- Remove window treatments and blinds. Wash or dry clean the curtains and dust off the blinds. Clean the window sills.

•Remove and wash bedding. Dry clean or professionally clean bedspreads, pillows and comforters. If a family member has severe allergies, consider replacing feather bedding with non-allergenic comforters and pillows.

•Dust pictures and other wall ornaments.

•Sweep and mop the kitchen and bathroom floors, cleaning behind fixtures and appliances.

• Vacuum carpets and rugs thoroughly. Rent a steam cleaner or have the carpeting professionally cleaned. A long term solution would be to replace carpeting with wood, vinyl, linoleum or tile flooring.

• Scrub the bathtub and shower with a disinfectant. Check around bathroom fixtures for leaks that may lead to mold growth.

Taking time to thoroughly clean your home can help everyone in your household feel better and have a healthier living environment. After a thorough cleaning, take time to create a regular cleaning plan that will maintain a healthy home. For helpful hints and cleaning tips, visit the Soap and Detergent website at [www.cleaning101.com](http://www.cleaning101.com)



# Is My Child Getting Enough ZZZZZ's

By: Sylvia Davis, Baker and Mitchell Counties



You may have heard of sleep disorders in adults, but children can suffer from them too. The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute reports that children and teens both need about 9 hours of sleep per night. When they fail to get this amount consistently, they develop what is known as "sleep debt".

With sleep debt, children and teens have decreases in performance, concentration, reaction time and ability to organize new information at home and at school. They are more likely to forget things, have an accident or be injured, and exhibit behavior and mood problems. Some children have actually been diagnosed with Attention Deficient Disorder when in reality they were just not getting enough sleep. Inadequate

sleep can negatively affect their grades, their skill at sports and their relationships with others.

Your child may have a sleep disorder if they

- Snore loudly often or all the time
- Stop breathing for short periods while sleeping
- Have problems staying awake during the day

Talk to your family doctor or pediatrician if your child has these symptoms.

Even if a child does not have a formal sleep disorder, he may just not be getting enough sleep. Here are some tips that may help your child sleep better:

- Set a regular bedtime and stick to it, even on weekends.

- Establish a relaxing bedtime routine, such as a warm bath or reading a bedtime story. Television right before bed often is too stimulating.
- Encourage quiet, relaxing activities after supper. Too much high energy activity near bedtime can keep a child awake.
- Avoid big meals near bedtime.
- Stop the caffeine at least 6 hours before bedtime. That includes soft drinks, tea and chocolate.
- Keep the bedroom at a comfortable temperature.
- Darken the room. If the child is afraid, use a small nightlight.
- Keep the noise level low.

Source: National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute Star Sleeper Web site.



## Holiday Salads

by Sylvia Davis, Baker County



### Fluffy Orange Salad

- 1 cup fat free cottage cheese
- 1 8oz container sugar free whipped topping, thawed
- 1 11oz can mandarin oranges, drained
- 1 .3oz package orange flavored sugar free gelatin

Combine all ingredients in a bowl. Cover and chill.  
Yield: 8 servings

### Cranberry Salad

- 1 (.6oz) package cherry sugar free gelatin
- 1 cup boiling water
- ½ cup orange juice
- 1 cup whole fresh cranberries, chopped
- 1 medium apple, chopped
- 1 large ripe banana, peeled and sliced
- ½ (8oz) container sugar free frozen whipped topping, thawed

Combine gelatin and water in a large bowl, stirring until gelatin dissolves. Stir in orange juice, cranberries, apple and banana. Pour mixture into a 4-cup mold; cover and chill until firm. Top with



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College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences/Athens, Georgia 30602-4356

*Dear Friends,*

*The Balancing Act is a quarterly publication sent to you by Family and Consumer Sciences Agents serving all South-west Georgia. All information in this newsletter is written by Specialists at the University of Georgia and FACS agents, and is backed by research from the University of Georgia and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.*

*This newsletter brings you the latest information, please contact the agent in your county.*

*Thank you,*

<i>Katie Barns</i>	<i>Tift County</i>	<i>(229) 391-7980</i>
<i>Peggy Bledsoe</i>	<i>Houston County</i>	<i>(478) 987-2028</i>
<i>Roxie Booker</i>	<i>Brooks County</i>	<i>(229) 263-4103</i>
<i>Wayne Coachman</i>	<i>Early County</i>	<i>(229)723-3072</i>
<i>Sylvia Davis</i>	<i>Baker County</i>	<i>(229) 734-3015</i>
<i>Sandra Gay</i>	<i>Stewart County</i>	<i>(229) 838-4908</i>
<i>Joan Mason</i>	<i>Sumter County</i>	<i>(229) 924-4476</i>
<i>Sandra McKinney</i>	<i>Crisp County</i>	<i>(229) 276-2612</i>
<i>Polly Morgan</i>	<i>Seminole County</i>	<i>(229) 524-2086</i>
<i>Andrea Scarrow</i>	<i>Colquitt County</i>	<i>(229) 616-7455</i>
<i>Suzanne Williams</i>	<i>Dougherty County</i>	<i>(229) 436-7216</i>
<i>Rachel West</i>	<i>Lanier County</i>	<i>(229) 482-3895</i>