

By Lacy Wolff, ERS Health Promotion Administrator



Some of our major holidays are still around the corner, and most of us need support and resources to maintain and improve our health and wellness during the holidays. ERS and your employer have partnered to provide you both support and resources.

This month we are focusing on having healthy holidays, and that **does not** mean you shouldn't eat pumpkin pie or mashed potatoes! When we say healthy holidays we mean your whole health throughout the holidays, which includes eating good food but more importantly, having a healthy mindset. How you think about health and wellness, dealing with social isolation, and even financial challenges all begins with your mindset. So here are a few things to think about as we move into the holiday season:

1. Think about your health “why.” Who and what do you value most, or care about? Connect the behavior you are trying to achieve to your “why.” For example, if you are [interested in quitting tobacco](#), first, think about why you want to quit and then establish a plan that will work for you. ERS will be hosting a [“Kick the Habit” workshop](#) in partnership with BCBSTX to help you better understand your habits and how to change them. Your health plan benefits can also support your health and wellness goals. For instance, your ERS health benefits include a tobacco cessation program,

weight management programs, and coverage of mental health services.

2. Social distancing does not mean social isolation. With mental health conditions on the rise, it is extremely important that we find ways to connect with each other right now. As humans, we are hard wired to connect with other people, so make a plan for how you will connect with your friends and family during the holidays in a safe, responsible and respectful manner.

3. Assess your finances and don't go into debt over gifts! We often feel immense pressure to buy expensive gifts during the holidays. Have a conversation with your family members about how you can minimize this stressor by creating a new tradition like making homemade gifts, writing gratitude letters, volunteering for a local non-profit, or gifting an experience that can be done safely. Plan an outdoor picnic, or an act of service, like detailing someone's car, rather than buying an expensive item that is likely unnecessary.

4. Don't wait until January if you want to make a change! We often think that we will magically change in January with the turning of a new year. While the New Year can feel like a fresh start, you can start engaging in new healthy behaviors any time! The best way to get new habits to stick is to keep them small. HealthSelect plan participants have access to some great programs including health coaching, self-management courses, and two healthy lifestyle programs Naturally Slim and Real Appeal. To see if you qualify, visit the [HealthSelect wellness page](#).

5. Join our monthly wellness webinars to hear from wellness leaders and connect with state employees across the state. Learn about wellness topics and stay focused on what matters most, you and your family's health and well-being! Register for events like our new **Healthy Holiday Mindset Webinar** through the [ERS Wellness Events Calendar](#).

