

SUSSEX COUNTY SENIOR TIMES

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Holiday Celebrations

Holiday celebrations will likely need to be different this year to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Avoid activities that are higher risk for spread. Consider fun alternatives that pose lower risk of spreading COVID-19.

The holidays are a time when many families travel long distances to celebrate together. [Travel](#) increases the chance of getting and spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. Staying home is the best way to protect yourself and others. If you must travel, be informed of the [risks involved](#).

Lower risk activities

- Having a small [dinner](#) with only people who live in your household
- Preparing traditional family recipes for family and neighbors, especially those at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, and delivering them in a way that doesn't involve contact with others
- Having a virtual dinner and sharing recipes with friends and family
- Shopping online rather than in person on the day after Thanksgiving or the next Monday
- Watching sports events, parades, and movies from home

Moderate risk activities

- Having a small outdoor [dinner](#) with family and friends who live in your community
- Lower your risk by following recommendations from the Centers for Disease and Prevention (CDC) on [hosting gatherings or cook-outs](#).

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- Visiting pumpkin patches or orchards where people use hand sanitizer before touching pumpkins or picking apples, wearing masks is encouraged or enforced, and people are able to maintain social distancing
- Attending a small outdoor sports events with safety precautions in place

Higher risk activities

Avoid these higher risk activities to help prevent the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19:

- Going shopping in crowded stores just before, on, or after Thanksgiving
- Participating or being a spectator at a crowded race
- Attending crowded parades
- Attending large indoor gatherings with people from outside of your household
- Using [alcohol or drugs](#) that may alter judgment and make it more difficult to practice COVID-19 safety measures.

Your holiday safety is important to us. For more information on how to protect yourself and your loved ones please visit www.cdc.gov.

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Winter Safety

Getting your home ready for winter - Below are some safety tips to prepare your home for the winter, keeping you safe.

Safety

- Check smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and replace batteries as needed.
- Keep a fire extinguisher handy and ensure everyone knows how to use it.
- If you leave your home for any period of time, have a neighbor or someone you trust check on your home daily.

Emergency Kit

- Prepare an emergency kit: flashlight, phone list, bottled water, non-perishable food, blankets, first aid kit, medications and pet food for your pet.

Thermostat

- Make sure you keep your house heated to at least 60 degrees, even when you are not home.
- Consider installing programmable thermostats to regulate the temperature.

Window and Doors

- Check weather-stripping, patch or caulk as needed.
- Consider thick drapes to help keep heat inside.

Tree Branches*

- Check tree branches and trim those close to the house or power line (when easily accessible).

Roof and Gutters

- Check for loose shingles and flashing.

Clean out gutters and downspouts.

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Winter Safety continued...

Furnace*

- Clean or replace your filter every 4-6 weeks.
- Check all fireplaces, chimneys and flues.

Hoses and Faucets

- Disconnect hoses and store inside.
- Locate the main water shut-off valve and know how to use it.
- Wrap outside pipes and spigots.

Pipe

- If the temperature drops below 20 degrees, let water trickle in all faucets.

*Your health and safety are important to us. Please be sure to consult a professional for assistance with these tips.



Social Security Announces 1.3 Percent Benefit Increase for 2021

Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits will increase 1.3 percent in 2021.

The 1.3 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will begin with benefits January 1, 2021.

Changes in the Medicare premiums have not yet been announced. Social Security cannot compute the new benefit amount until after the Medicare premiums are announced. Check www.medicare.gov for information.

Final 2021 benefit amounts will be communicated to beneficiaries in December through the mailed COLA notice and my Social Security's Message Center.

This information has been obtained from www.socialsecurity.gov/cola.