

HOME & FAMILY IDEAS

Matanuska-Susitna Copper River District Cooperative Extension Service
809 S. Chugach, Palmer, Alaska 99645

745-3360

November, 2005

When the calendar turns to November, signs of the approaching holidays keep popping up. Sometimes these signs trigger great anticipation of get-togethers with friends and family, special foods and gifts. Sometimes they trigger anxiety and stress — How will I afford the gifts or the extra ingredients for the treats we make at this time of year? How will I find the time to do extra cleaning, extra baking, fit in parties or exchange cards? So much to do, and so little time! Start by taking a few minutes now, take some deep breathing, then gather the family together and make a plan.

Consider the extra financial costs. With higher fuel rates, will you be able to travel as you have in the past? Look at your gift list. Is it manageable or do you need to shift to exchanging names? Is a whole turkey or ham with all the trimmings important to your family or would your family prefer a different type of meal this year?

Now consider the time you have available and who will do which tasks. When I started working full time we had to discuss the dozen different types of holiday treats we make. Everyone in my family has their favorites so cutting down the number was not the option we wanted to choose. Instead, everyone pitched in to help. Many of the treats could also be made ahead and frozen, which helps make the time commitment less onerous. It was hard for me to give up some of those tasks because I love baking and cooking. By including the whole family, though, everyone takes pride in the accomplishments and we have some great family times together.

Start meal plans, shopping, cleaning, baking decorating and wrapping early so last minute preparations don't have to include extra time-consuming trips to the grocery store with other harried individuals. Or the frenzied rush before guests arrive.

Now when you see signs of Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hannukah or Kwanza, you can smile and

know that you have preparations well in hand for a low-stress, enjoyable holiday season.

Julie Cascio

District Home Economist



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UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Pressure Canner Dial Gauge Testing

Have dial gauges on pressure canners tested annually for accuracy.

Wednesday mornings, 9 am – 11 am **FREE**
CES office, 809 S. Chugach, Suite 2, Palmer

A Taste for Tuesday

Explore options for making healthy eating and fitness decisions. For 6, 7, and 8 grade youth
October 18 to November 22, Tuesday afternoons,
2:45 – 4:00 pm Palmer Public Library
Call 745-3360 for more information

Cold Climate Home Building Techniques

Having a technically proficient, well-functioning house is essential to life in the North. Discussion will include windows, ventilation, walls, indoor air quality, roofs and wind and seismic activity.

November 2 and 3, 2005 6 - 9 pm **FREE**
FSM 107, Mat-Su College
Call 745-3360 to register

Solar Energy for Alaskans

What's possible? What's real? What's for me? Discuss local options for solar energy.

November 4, 2005 1 – 5 pm \$10
Call 745-3360 to register

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HEALTH/FOOD SAFETY/FAMILIES

At Risk for Falls

The holiday season can bring with it an increased risk of injuries from falls, as people use ladders, stools and furniture to hang lights, ornaments and other decorations. Data from past holiday seasons show two-thirds of the injured were 20 to 49 years old. Holiday falls can be prevented through strategies such as using ladders safely, and using stable step stools rather than furniture when arranging holiday decorations.

The first step in preventing falls is to realize that you can fall! It seems obvious, but when we focus on getting those holiday decorations in place, standing on the nearest piece of furniture, even if it is a rocking chair, is too tempting. Take the extra minute to pull out a safer alternative for reaching high places. One option is a sturdy step stool. Then use safe ladder practices.

Safe ladder practices include:



- Make sure the ladder is on a secure and level footing before climbing.
- Space the base of the ladder one foot away from the wall for every four feet it reaches up.
- Stay centered between the rails of the ladder. Do not overreach—move the ladder.
- Do not stand on the ladder's top two rungs.
- To reach a roof, extend the ladder at least three feet beyond the edge of the roof.
- Keep the area around the top and bottom of the ladder clear.
- Make sure step ladders are securely locked open. Never use a folding step ladder when it is closed.

Now that you have a sturdy step stool or ladder and are using it safely, also be aware of hazards waiting to trip you, like decorations on the floor. Be aware, be safe and have an injury-free holiday season.

Sources: <http://www.cdc.gov/injury>
<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5348a1.htm>

Children and Choking Hazards

Peanuts, popcorn, hotdogs, candy—sounds like a vendor at a baseball game! Actually it is the beginning of a list of foods that can get stuck in children's throats and sometimes their lungs.

Almost all solid foods can pose some risk for choking. Foods of a size and shape that can obstruct breathing if they become lodged in the airway are especially dangerous. Seeds, chunks of meat or cheese or peanut butter, whole grapes, raw vegetables, raisins, chewing gum, and hard, gooey or sticky candy are other foods that should not be given to children younger than 4.

Every child is at risk for choking. Younger children have a tendency to place objects in their mouths, have poor chewing ability, and have narrow airways which create high risk. Swallowing accompanied by laughing or a deep breath can cause food to be inhaled. Foods too large for swallowing may lodge in the throat.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends young children be supervised during mealtime and taught to chew their food well. Children should sit while eating and not lie down or run around. Before serving firm round food to children younger than 4 years old, cut it into small pieces, not larger than one-half inch. Parents and other care givers should insure that older children do not give dangerous foods to a younger child.

Care givers must also keep a watchful eye on children while playing and keep dangerous toys, foods and household items out of reach. The list of choking hazards continues and includes latex balloons, coins, marbles, toys that can be compressed to fit entirely into a child's mouth, small balls, pen or marker caps, small button-type batteries, and toys with small parts. In addition, learning how to provide early treatment for children who are choking is a proactive step.

Source: Bren, L., "Prevent your Child from Choking," FDA Consumer 39(5):25, September-October 2005

CLEANING/ORGANIZING

Preparing for Disasters

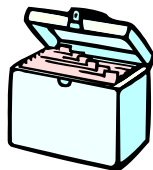
You never really know what to expect. Disasters, whether natural or man-made, strike quickly, with little or no warning. You may have little, if any, time to gather supplies or documents. It is important to prepare for the possibility of disaster, not wait until it happens.

Earthquakes, wild fires, house fires, volcanoes erupting, tsunamis, extreme winter cold... Let's do what we can to protect our families. Have a transportable kit that includes water, food, and medicine for five days, first aid supplies, flashlight and extra batteries, a portable radio with batteries, a change of clothes and a sleeping bag for each member of the family ready to grab at a moment's notice. In addition you may need some financial information. Documents you may need are:

- Checkbooks
- Personal identification
- Cash to cover one to two weeks' emergency expenses
- Credit cards
- Extra set of house keys and car keys

Copies of the following:

- Birth Certificate, marriage certificate
- Car titles
- Driver's license
- Social security cards
- Deeds
- Estate documents
- Home inventory record
- Investment account numbers, passwords and name of financial advisors and phone numbers
- Insurance Policies
- Medical records, including health insurance card, doctor's name and phone number
- Power of attorney, living will, and other medical power
- Safe deposit box information (location, contents, and key)
- Backups of critical digital information, such as any accounting files



FOOD AND NUTRITION

Is Turkey on Your Menu?

Cooking a traditional turkey dinner for Thanksgiving often brings many questions. Let's explore some of them.

What size turkey do I need?

Size of Turkey	Number of People
Whole bird	1 pound per person
Boneless breast of turkey	½ pound per person
Breast of turkey	¾ pound per person
Prestuffed frozen turkey	1 ¼ pounds per person – keep frozen until ready to cook

Do I want fresh or frozen turkey?

A frozen bird may be purchased at any time. Make sure there is adequate storage in the freezer to keep it frozen until it is time to thaw it. Purchase a fresh turkey only 1-2 days before cooking.

How long will a frozen turkey take to thaw?

Thawing Time In the Refrigerator	
8 to 12 pound turkey	1 to 2 days
12 to 16 pound turkey	2 to 3 days
16 to 20 pound turkey	3 to 4 days
20 to 24 pound turkey	4 to 5 days

Thawing Time In Cold Water	
8 to 12 pound turkey	4 to 6 hours
12 to 16 pound turkey	6 to 8 hours
16 to 20 pound turkey	8 to 10 hours
20 to 24 pound turkey	8 to 10 hours

Submerge the turkey in cold water if you choose this option for thawing. Change the water every 30 minutes to keep it cold.

How long will it take a turkey to roast in a 325°F oven?

The times in the table below are approximate. Always use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature of your turkey and stuffing. *The center of the stuffing should reach 165°F; 170°F for breasts; 180°F for whole turkeys.*

Unstuffed Turkey	
4 to 8 pounds (breast)	1 ½ to 3 ¼ hours
8 to 12 pounds	2 ¾ to 3 hours
12 to 14 pounds	3 to 3 ¾ hours
14 to 18 pounds	3 ¾ to 4 ¼ hours
18 to 20 pounds	4 ¼ to 4 ½ hours
20 to 24 pounds	4 ½ to 5 hours

If you stuff your bird, add an extra half hour to the approximate roasting time.

MONEY MATTERS

Identity Theft Happens to Children, too

Identity theft is not just for adults. Offenses against children are on the rise, and a University of Florida consumer education expert says the problem can actually be worse for younger victims.

"Many parents don't realize that child identity theft exists, which means the crime often goes undetected for years," said Mary Harrison, a professor with University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.

"Parents need to know how to recognize child identity theft because early discovery can greatly reduce the impact on victims," she said. "If the crime is reported promptly, the thief has less time to run up debt, and authorities have a better chance of finding evidence."

In some respects, identity thieves treat personal data from children and adults the same way. Most often, they use stolen information to conduct fraudulent financial transactions, though they sometimes use it to obtain government documents such as driver's licenses, or give it to police when stopped or charged with a crime. But when it comes to credit card fraud, child identity theft differs in an important respect: Thieves necessarily create new credit accounts for child victims, whereas most cases of adult identity theft involve existing accounts. That can make the crime worse for child victims.

According to a 2003 FTC survey, victims of new account fraud spend four times as much time and almost five times as much money clearing their records compared with victims who had only existing accounts accessed.

Safeguarding a child's identity requires many of the same precautions parents should take for themselves but with a few twists. Preschool-age children are unlikely to be approached by scammers, so parents must protect documents and other information. Parents should avoid carrying their child's Social Security card, and should complain if their child's school uses Social Security numbers to identify students.

For older children, the popularity of personal computers in homes and schools creates a risk they will be victimized by Internet scams such as "phishing." Parents can monitor their children's Internet use, talk to their kids about identity theft and

tell them what information they should and should not share with others.

Parents should also monitor incoming mail for children of all ages because credit card offers or even debt collection notices can indicate credit activity is taking place already, said Linda Foley of the Identity Theft Resource Center, a nonprofit organization based in San Diego, California. "Getting a credit card offer addressed to your child does not necessarily mean there's a problem," Foley said. "If you have opened a bank account or a frequent flyer card in your child's name, your child may receive mass-mailings from credit affiliates. Parents should call the company that has the child's information to see if they're on a marketing list."

Receiving debt collection notices in your child's name is a much more serious indication that your child's information is being misused, and warrants checking the child's credit report with the three major credit reporting agencies, Experian, TransUnion, and Equifax, she said. Parents should consider checking their children's credit reports every year, especially if they suspect their personal information has been compromised. Ordering an annual credit report for your child increases the likelihood you will uncover child identity theft in a timely fashion. If no credit accounts have been established in your child's name, the credit agencies will inform you that your child does not have a credit report.

A new federal law has made free credit reports available to Alaskans. Parents who discover evidence of child identity theft should immediately report fraudulent activity to one of the three major credit reporting agencies and ask that a fraud alert be placed on the child's credit record. Parents should also contact any creditors listed in the child's credit report and file a police report. This is a serious crime and action should be taken immediately. A person's credit score is becoming so important now—not just for getting credit, but also for obtaining insurance, finding housing, and applying for jobs. ID theft can have a very far-reaching impact.

Further resources for victims of identity theft can be found at the ITRC's website at <http://www.idtheftcenter.org/index.shtml>.

Free annual credit reports can be ordered by phone at 877-322-8228 or online at <https://www.annualcreditreport.com/cra/index.jsp>.

Adapted from a University of Florida press release.