

Living Well With Lupus – Holidays? No Problem!
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For those who have read my articles on kitchen coping, you may remember me writing, living with lupus means adapting to various types of limitations, basically doing things differently than we did before the current flare up of symptoms. Holidays do not have to set you back for weeks or months. There are simple steps you can take to conserve your energy and actually enjoy yourself this holiday season.

The most obvious yet least often performed task is to make your health the number one priority. Only plan to attend or accept invitations to the number of parties, shopping trips, visits to friends or family and other events that you can do without pushing past your activity threshold. This threshold is the amount of things you can do without getting over tired, without causing dramatically increased muscle or joint pain, sleep deprivation, headaches or other symptoms.

The natural human tendency is to want to do more than we should, to perhaps do as much as we used to be able to do before we got sick. Before going out or hosting a party, plan for it. Organize the shopping, cleaning, cooking and other preparations over a period of days or weeks limiting the amount of energy that you spend to the same amount of time you would spend on a typical day if it was not the holidays. Don't try to do everything on the day of an event. If you do, you will be setting yourself up for a flare, exhaustion or both.

Try something new, host a pre-planned pot luck instead of you making everything for a dinner. You can get a friend, child or family member to help. You can make and freeze food in advance. Give yourself time to prepare well in advance so that an event is not a stressor but a stress reliever. The time it takes to prepare for events or shopping well in advance, pays big dividends while hosting or attending the events because you are more rested and having less symptoms.

You have a chronic illness. You do not have to explain yourself to anyone, or justify why you cannot participate in things. Family and friends need to learn to respect your limitations, not criticize you for them. If they refuse to accept your reality, sometimes it may be necessary to stay away or take a vacation from negative people for awhile until they learn to respect you.

Reclaim the holidays on your terms. Be good to yourself by planning ahead and only doing as much as your body is capable of. Rest when you need to. When you absolutely cannot do the cooking, driving or shopping yourself, allow yourself the grace to accept it and then have the wisdom and courage to ask for help from family or a friend. Joy, fun and friendship are good for the body, the mind and the spirit.

Enjoy this holiday season!