



'Tis the season to be jolly ... **IN MODERATION**

While no one is immune to serious illness, there are lifestyle factors that can significantly impact your level of risk. We don't want to put a dampener on your Christmas celebrations, but we would like to share with you a few things to keep in mind this silly season.



FOR most of us, December is the month for delicious food and a few celebratory drinks. Fatty foods and excessive alcohol can lead to high triglyceride levels, which may contribute to pancreatitis or hardening of the arteries. This increases your risk of stroke, heart attack and heart disease.

Most often, there are no symptoms of having elevated triglycerides. Weight loss, a healthy diet, exercise and restricting alcohol are recommended. Treatment to reduce triglyceride levels may include fish oil, vitamin B-3 (niacin) or other medication.

HDL cholesterol, also known as the 'good cholesterol', is a fat that circulates in your blood. Having a certain amount of cholesterol is normal, but if your good cholesterol is too low, or your bad cholesterol is too high, there are lifestyle changes and medications you can take to reduce your risk.

In addition to helping you lose weight, increased physical activity can lower your triglycerides, while increasing your HDL levels. Benefits can be seen with as little as 60 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise a week. Where possible, try to avoid trans fats. Foods prepared with shortening, such as cakes and cookies, often contain trans fats, as do most fried foods and some margarines.

The good news for those wishing to have a few glasses of 'Christmas cheer' is that moderate alcohol consumption has been linked with higher levels of HDL cholesterol. The key word here is moderate. For healthy adults, this means up to one drink a day for women of all ages and men older than age 65, and up to two drinks a day for men age 65 and younger. Too much alcohol can cause weight gain, and may increase your blood pressure and triglyceride levels.

Research presented by Rebecca Theal from the Gallipoli Medical Research Foundation (GMRF) at the Australasian Military Medical Association (AMMA) Conference in October, found veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) were more likely to meet the criteria for metabolic syndrome compared to veterans without PTSD.

Metabolic syndrome is a collection of conditions/risk factors – including

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The Gallipoli Medical Research Foundation is committed to enhancing the health of our veterans and the wider Australian community. We're hard at work developing new treatment options for serious illnesses such as fatty liver disease and liver cancer.



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high blood pressure, obesity, high triglycerides, insulin resistance and low HDL cholesterol – that together increase your risk of stroke, heart disease and Type 2 diabetes.

The research presented at AMMA is part of the GMRF PTSD Initiative, a world-first research project investigating both the long-term physical and psychological toll of PTSD in Vietnam veterans.

The overall PTSD Initiative findings were published earlier this year in the *Medical Journal of Australia* by a multidisciplinary team of GMRF investigators in partnership with RSL Queensland. It found veterans with a diagnosis of PTSD displayed increased rates of poor health outcomes, including heart disease, gastric complaints and sleep disorders.

To find out more, visit www.gallipoliresearch.com.au.

TIPS FOR THE SILLY SEASON

Valerie Xin Pei Tay, who recently completed her Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics (Honours) at Queensland University of Technology, shares some tips you can use when attending a Christmas function this silly season.



Limit yourself to a small serving of each dish/nibbles.



Use a smaller serving plate for portion control.



Have a light snack or meal before – avoid going on an empty stomach; our body sends cues to reach out for unhealthy choices when we are hungry.



Fill plate with salads, lean meats and whole grains before fried foods and sweet desserts.



Be mindful of the dressing, gravies and sauces.



Drink plain water or lemon/mint-infused water with meals.



Chew and eat slowly – avoid eating and talking at the same time.



Sit away from where the food is served when chatting over food.



Discuss foods with friends/family and opt for healthier take-out choices, e.g. salads, wholegrain sandwiches, baked over fried foods; or suggest a themed potluck, with healthy ingredients only.



Walk around the place and spend quality time with family and friends before taking food.



Ask yourself, “Am I hungry?” before heading for the next serving.