



Holiday healers MDs swear by

All that celebrating can lead to GI problems, stress overload and other minor health woes. So we asked doctors for the natural remedies they “prescribe” to their own children when seasonal symptoms strike



To quell a cough

Garlic + honey

“Christmas waits for no illness! One year, one of my children came down with a sore throat and cough on Christmas Eve,” recalls Mary Ellen Renna, M.D., a mother of three and author of *10 Steps to Almost Perfect Parenting*. To help her daughter feel better before Santa arrived, Dr. Renna heated up 8 oz. of water, 1 tsp. of kosher salt and a thin slice of a garlic on the stove until the salt dissolved. When the mix had cooled down a bit, Dr. Renna gave her daughter 2 tsp. of honey, then had her gargle the garlic water. “Honey is an antiviral and cough suppressant, plus it helps counter the less than pleasant taste of the gargle, and the warmth of the gargle boosts blood flow to the irritated area,” says Dr. Renna. “Salt helps kill the virus and garlic is naturally antiviral.” Her daughter was back to her old self by Christmas morning.

To soothe 'tis the season stress

A baking session

“Baking cookies makes the kids feel comforted and relaxed, which is great for the hectic holiday season,” says father-of-two Jose Colon, M.D., founder of Paradise Sleep, an organization dedicated to sleep education. “Doing a family activity is calming, as is kneading the dough—much like using a stress ball.” Plus, the scent of the vanilla extract used in the recipe boosts feelings of joy and relaxation, according to a study in the journal *Chemical Senses*. To avoid the post-cookie-eating sugar rush, Dr. Colon adds nuts to his recipe, which helps keep blood sugar in check. “Santa and the kids love our oatmeal–chocolate chip cookies with walnuts!”

To outsmart treat overload

Probiotics

“One year, my son’s holiday diet of treats got him backed up—he hadn’t moved his bowels in days,” says father-of-two Anish Sheth, M.D., coauthor of *What’s Your Poo Telling You?* “The lack of fiber plus inadequate water intake led to difficult-to-pass stool. Needless to say, he wasn’t feeling the holiday spirit.” To get things moving, Dr. Sheth gave his son a kid-friendly probiotic and made sure he sipped at least 6 oz. of water at meals. (Water helps soften stool, so it’s easier to pass.) “It started to kick in within 24 hours. And once my son passed his first stool, he felt much better.” A probiotic to try: Culturelle Kids (\$19 for 30 packets, Target.com). ✨

quick
take

Reasons kids skip hand-washing at school

- 43% Don't have time
- 21% Don't like to use school bathrooms
- 19% Lack of cleaning supplies
- 16% Not being reminded
- 15% Think the bathrooms are "disgusting"
- 12% "No one else does it"

SOURCE: American Cleaning Institute