

A bi-monthly publication for Senior Citizens
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GOLDEN YEARS

PMC Home Care Services bring healing to patients' front door

Home care services are among many things Providence Medical Center provides to its' patients and community.

Services offered are Personal Care, Home Healthcare, and Hospice Care which can all be provided in the comfort of your

home or living facility.

Personal Care Services can include bathing assistance, light housekeeping,

meal preparation, and assistance with errands for patients in their homes. Most personal care services are performed by nurse aides who do everything possible to ensure patients stay in their homes as long as they can. Often, a close relation-



Special thank-you gifts

As part of several area Veterans' Day programs, those who served in the military were recognized and presented Quilts of Valor by area quilters. Quilts of Valor recipients at the Wayne Veterans' Day program included (front) Alvin Anderson, Brad Wieland, Dennis Rhode and Terry Roberts. (back) Jerry Junck, Robert Woehler, Steve Glassmeyer, Ben Promes and Richard Siefken. Quilts of Valor recipients at Winside included (front) Larry Hansen, Victor Mann, Delbert Gowler and Dennis Van-Houten. (back) Duane Thies, David Bloomfield, Stan Stenwall, Dennis Jensen, and Randy Marks. These quilts, along with others distributed throughout the area were sewn by Quilts of Valor Quilters at Yhe Quilt Shop in Wakefield. The group gets together twice a month throughout the year to work on them. Anyone interested in being part of the group is welcome to attend.



ship is developed between patients and the nurse aides which offers companionship to those who may not be able to leave their homes for social activities anymore.

These services can be covered by some long-term insurance plans, Veteran benefits, or through private pay.

Home Healthcare provides skilled nursing care to individuals of all ages who may require specific medical monitoring, treatments, or therapy services. This service provides comfort and care in the home by eliminating challenges for those who may have difficulty leaving their house for certain medical care. Home Healthcare offers a variety of services from newborn follow-up care, education of new disease processes and treatment plans to provide certain intravenous medications. Other special services that are offered are wound care through our two certified wound care nurses or specialized therapy including physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy.

Hospice Care Services are offered to patients who are near the end of life. The care team consists of nurses, aides, social work, spiritual care providers, volunteers, and your medical provider who all work together to offer holistic care and comfort at the end of life. Hospice care provides a circle of support for the patient and family during this time and extends to families during the bereavement period. The hospice team assists with nursing care and bathing, spiritual care needs, along with having volunteers who visit patients spending time with them, playing music for them, reading to them, and offering companionship at times when friends and families cannot be present.

The Providence Home Care Services team travel within a 45-mile radius of Wayne. For more information on these services, please contact Providence Medical Center at (402) 375-4288.

See Picture, Page 5

Year-End 2021 Tax Tips shared

Information provided by George Phelps, CFP

Here are some things to consider as you weigh potential tax moves before the end of the year.

Defer Income to Next Year

Consider opportunities to defer income to 2022, particularly if you think you may be in a lower tax bracket then. For example, you may be able to defer a year-end bonus or delay the collection of business debts, rents, and payments for services in order to postpone payment of tax on the income until next year.

Accelerate Deductions

Look for opportunities to accelerate deductions into the current tax year. If you itemize deductions, making payments for deductible expenses such as medical expenses, qualifying interest, and state taxes before the end of the year (instead of paying them in early 2022) could make a difference on your 2021 return.

Make Deductible Charitable Contributions

If you itemize deductions on your federal income tax return, you can generally deduct charitable contributions, but the deduction is limited to 60%, 30%, or 20% of your adjusted gross income (AGI), depending on the type of property you give and the type of organization to which you contribute. (Excess amounts can be carried over for up to five years.) For 2021 charitable gifts, the normal rules have been enhanced: The limit is increased to 100% of AGI for direct cash gifts to public charities.

And even if you don't itemize deductions, you can receive a \$300 charitable deduction (\$600 for joint returns) for direct cash gifts to public charities (in addition to the standard deduction).

Bump Up Withholding

If it looks as though you're going to owe federal income tax for the year, consider increasing your withholding on Form W-4 for the remainder of the year to cover the shortfall.

The biggest advantage in doing so is that withholding is considered as having been paid evenly throughout the year instead of when the dollars are actually taken from your paycheck.

Increase Retirement Savings

Deductible contributions to a traditional IRA and pre-tax contributions to an employer-sponsored retirement plan such as a 401(k) can help reduce your 2021 taxable income. If you haven't already contributed up to the maximum amount allowed, consider doing so.

For 2021, you can contribute up to \$19,500 to a 401(k) plan (\$26,000 if you're age 50 or older) and up to \$6,000 to traditional and Roth IRAs combined (\$7,000 if you're age 50 or older). The window to make 2021 contributions to an employer plan generally closes at the end of the year, while you have until April 15, 2022, to make 2021 IRA contributions. (Roth contributions are not deductible, but qualified Roth distributions are not taxable.)

Consider postponing income and/or accelerating deductions if: you expect to be in a lower tax bracket (perhaps due to retirement) next year; your itemized deductions are greater than the standard deduction this year; or you want to delay payment of tax.

Consider accelerating income and/or postponing deductions if: you expect to be in a higher tax bracket next year (perhaps you have a lower income this year); the standard deduction is greater than your itemized deductions this year; or you're subject to alternative minimum tax this year and certain deductions are

disallowed.

RMDs Are Back in 2021

While required minimum distributions (RMDs) were waived for 2020, they are back for 2021. If you are age 72 or older, you generally must take RMDs from traditional IRAs and employer-sponsored retirement plans (an exception may apply if you're still working for the employer sponsoring the plan). Take any distributions by the date required — the end of the year for most individuals. The penalty for failing to do so is substantial: 50% of any amount that you failed to distribute as required. After the death of the IRA owner or plan participant, distributions are also generally required by beneficiaries (either annu-

ally or under the 10-year rule; there are special rules for spouses).

Weigh Year-End Investment Moves

Though you shouldn't let tax considerations drive your investment decisions, it's worth considering the tax implications of any year-end investment moves. For example, if you have realized net capital gains from selling securities at a profit, you might avoid being taxed on some or all of those gains by selling losing positions. Any losses above the amount of your gains can be used to offset up to \$3,000 of ordinary income (\$1,500 if your filing status is married filing separately) or carried forward to reduce your taxes in future years.



Steps to take before donating to charity

Donations from private citizens are the lifeblood of many nonprofit organizations. Without donations from millions of well-intentioned individuals, many charities would not be able to fulfill their missions.

When donating to charitable organizations, donors typically want to know their donations will make a difference. With a little pre-donation research and a few smart giving strategies, prospective donors can make sure their donations ultimately end up doing the most good.

- Refine your online searches. The Federal Trade Commission recommends searching online for a cause you care about but adding certain terms to the search before choosing a charity. For example, if you're passionate about helping the homeless, instead of entering "charities for the homeless" into the search engine, search for "highly rated charities for the homeless." Such a search may uncover red flags about certain organizations and direct you to the most reputable charity possible.

- Vet a charity before donating. Transparency is important when choosing a charity. A charity should willingly share information such as how donation dollars are spent and the programs that have been established to help it meet its mission. Such information should be readily available on the organization's website. The FTC recommends donors learn how much of their donations will be used to provide direct support to the programs. The FTC also recommends being suspicious of charities that do not provide detailed information about their missions and programs.

- Don't go it alone. Vetting charities is important, but donors shouldn't feel like they have to do all that legwork on their own. Various organizations, including Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance, Charity Navigator and CharityWatch exist to protect donors and ensure they give wisely. Local government regulators also may be able to provide information about charities to help donors avoid fraud.

Charitable donations help millions of people every day. Donors can protect themselves and ensure their money is used wisely by doing their homework before giving to nonprofit organizations.



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Cemetery Association begins Capital Campaign

The Greenwood Cemetery Association (ASSOCIATION) was formed in 1893 and has a five-member volunteer Board of Trustees. They are tasked with the maintenance, upkeep and preservation of the cemetery for current and future generations.

The ASSOCIATION membership is made up of those individuals and families who own grave spaces in the Cemetery.

The ASSOCIATION does not receive any funding from the City or County of Wayne by way of taxation or levy through property tax collection. With that in mind, the ASSOCIATION will be initiating a Capital Campaign to raise funds for a variety of necessary projects, repairs and improvements.

The Trustees have reviewed and prioritized the items that need funding and are seeking assistance with meeting these financial needs.

The ASSOCIATION's most important priority is to maintain accurate records for the more than 10,000 graves, including availability for purchase, individual plot ownership and burial records. Currently it requires multiple entries in four different programs to track the necessary information.

The ASSOCIATION needs to upgrade to a single-entry system that would replace the current inefficient four step system.

The cemetery management software system upgrade would include GIS (Geographical Information System) mapping and on-line burial search. This advanced technology will allow the ASSOCIATION to update records, maps, ownership and burials with a single entry. The data will be hosted in 'cloud technology'



and be available to anyone, anywhere in the world, at any time via a computer, a tablet, a cell phone or any smart device.

The Legacy Fund of Wayne has awarded the ASSOCIATION a grant sufficient to cover most of the upgrades to the technology equipment. However, the software upgrades will require an additional investment of \$25,000. The ASSOCIATION computer, hardware and technology will be moved to the Greenwood Cemetery Chapel where it will soon have internet capability.

The Chapel requires updating and maintenance so that it can continue to

be used for years to come. The windows and doors need replacing, the concrete slab floor must be leveled and adding gutters is necessary to prevent the damage from recurring. The Chapel then can be used for services in inclement weather or family gatherings. These upgrades are estimated at about \$75,000. Ultimately, the ASSOCIATION envisions an office being added to the northwest side for the records processing and storage.

Some projects will take several years to complete due to the enormity and cost.

One such item is repair and replacement of the roads that are in disrepair. The cemetery roads were originally poured by the W.P.A. under the FDR Administration. Some of the east/west roads along the north boundary were

replaced several years ago. The City of Wayne replaced the far west north-south road this last year for better access to the City's water tower. The remaining roads are failing and are requiring replacement.

In addition, the Cemetery has been severely affected by "pine wilt" and had to remove a significant number of old growth trees. Some were also removed due to storm damage. The ASSOCIATION is anxious to start a re-treesing program to maintain the beauty of our Cemetery.

Also, as time passes headstones/markers/monuments have tipped or are tilting. Often there are no surviving family members in the area to repair those stones. The ASSOCIATION has allotted a small annual budget to be able to address this need too.

Finally, the ASSOCIATION would like to add structures for above ground burials. The increase in Cremains burials each year indicates this will be the trend moving forward. The area to the north of the Chapel and the east/west area just inside the south fence along Seventh Street would be ideal for this purpose. This goal is a longer-term project and should make for the best use of the existing grounds.

The ASSOCIATION will be seeking donations and pledges to assist in meeting the needs of the Cemetery. The expected implementation of projects will be anywhere from one to five years at an estimated cost of \$175,000.

Anyone who would like to make a donation or pledge, please contact the Greenwood Cemetery Association at PO Box 292, Wayne, Neb. 68787. If there is a specific project that is of an interest to you and your wish is to fund it, please designate that and the ASSOCIATION will honor your intentions.

Did you know?

Lights on a Christmas tree may seem like a relatively recent phenomenon, but people who can't wait to deck the halls each December may be surprised to learn that this beloved tradition dates all the way back to the late nineteenth century.

Edward Johnson, a friend and colleague of Thomas Edison, introduced holiday light bulbs in 1882.

Prior to that, candles were lit on trees and families would briefly gaze at this awe-inspiring bit of holiday decor before the candles were quickly extinguished. Johnson is credited with being the first to suggest light bulbs, which were invented by his friend Edison, be used to light trees in place of candles.

While many were impressed by Johnson's eight-bulb holiday display, it remained a novelty until the 1920s, when pre-assembled lights became more accessible. Since then, Christmas tree lights have taken hold as a must-have piece of holiday decor in households across the globe.





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Country View staff members complete 'Abilities Care Expert' training

A special “pinning ceremony” was held at Wayne Country View recently. Five staff members at the facility completed training to become an “Abilities

approach program,” said Marci Woehler, PTA, Therapy Program Manager/Chief Therapy Officer at the facility. The five graduates include: Katie Tal-

The Abilities Care Approach provides patients with Alzheimer’s disease and Related Dementias (ADRD) the opportunity to achieve and maintain their high-

es, allows caregivers to impact functional performance in activities of daily living, functional mobility, communication, and engagement in meaningful activities.

The Abilities Care Approach results in a comprehensive understanding of resident’s remaining abilities, as well as an understanding of their life story and history. This comprehensive understanding of the resident guides caregivers in developing interventions and approaches that match the individual’s preferences and interests, and are adapted to his or her best ability to function.

This approach to treatment is taken from Claudia Allen’s Cognitive Disabilities Model and focuses on a rehabilitative approach to care. Once a resident’s abilities and needs are fully understood, the caretaker can identify successful approaches and adaptations to caregiving / communication and the environment to promote function. The final phase of the intervention is focused on teaching and training those who interact with the resident (staff, caregivers, and families) the strategies and adaptations that facilitate a best ability to function.

“We have successfully trained five staff members outside of the therapy department who have applied, interviewed, and completed a 6.5 hour training provided by our own OT, Kim Cooper who is a TEACHA (Therapy Expert of Abilities Care Holistic Approach),” Woehler said.

“We couldn’t be more proud and excited to have gotten our program to where it is to be able to provide this additional training to our staff to best care for our residents and improve our residents interaction with their loved ones,” she added.



Involved in the pinning ceremony were (left) Olivia Thompson, CNA; Katie Talbot, LPN; Liz Schlamann, CNA/CMA; and Shelby Brodkorb, dietary, Kim Cooper, OT, TEACHA (Therapy Expert Abilities Care Holistic Approach) and Marci Woehler, PTA, Therapy Program Manager, Chief Therapy Officer. Not pictured, Jazmine Duhsman, CNA/CMA/transportation.

Care Expert.”
“Here at Wayne Country View we have spent the last two years training our therapist and building our Abilities Care Ap-

proach program,” said Marci Woehler, PTA, Therapy Program Manager/Chief Therapy Officer at the facility. The five graduates include: Katie Tal-

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Follow these Age-based health screening guidelines

Early detection is crucial to overcoming serious illnesses. Preventive care is something parents prioritize when raising children, but it's a crucial component of healthy living as an adult as well.

Health professionals recommend various age-specific screenings and tests, and these can serve as a guideline for individuals as they navigate adulthood. The following age-specific health

screening recommendations, courtesy of Beaumont Health and Columbia Doctors Primary Care, can serve as an preventive care guideline, though doctors may advise patients to get more frequent screenings depending on their medical histories.

18 to 39 years old

- **Cholesterol:** A cholesterol check should occur around age 20, then every five years until age 35. Afterward it can occur annually.

- **Skin screening:** An annual full body screening will identify any suspicious moles or skin lesions.

- **Cervical cancer:** Women in this age range should receive a Pap smear every three years and an annual pelvic exam.

- **Breast exam:** Self-examination of the breasts and examination by a clinical provider should take place every year.

- **Testicular exam:** Men should conduct self exams for testicular abnormalities. Doctors may examine the testicles during annual physicals as well.

- **Tdap vaccine:** All adults should get the Tdap vaccine if they did not receive it as an adolescent to protect against pertussis, and then a Td (tetanus, diphtheria) booster shot every 10 years.

- **HPV vaccine:** The human papilloma virus vaccine is recommended if you did not receive it as an adolescent.

40 to 64

- **Zoster (Shingles) vaccine:** Two doses

of this vaccine will be administered between two and six months apart starting at age 50 and up.

- **Colorectal screening:** A colonoscopy to detect any colorectal illnesses is recommended beginning at age 50.

- **Prostate screening:** Prostate screenings begin at age 50 unless you are a high-risk individual, in which case screenings begin at age 40.

- **Osteoporosis:** Doctors may recommend a bone density test and osteoporosis screening at age 50 and up if certain risk factors are present.

- **Lung cancer screening:** If you are a past or current smoker, it's wise to have an annual lung cancer screening. The American Lung Association says adults age 55 and up can have this screening covered by health insurance.

- **Mammogram:** Women should begin receiving annual mammograms at age 40.

65 years and older

- **Cervical cancer:** Most women can stop getting Pap smears at this age if they have no history of cervical cancer. Women who have had a hysterectomy may no longer need pelvic exams after age 65.

- **Pneumococcal and pneumonia vaccines:** These are recommended every five years for certain conditions and risk factors.

- **Cognitive health:** Doctors may assess your cognitive health to see if there are any risk factors for dementias.

In addition to these screenings, doctors may conduct annual depression screenings to assess mental health. Routine blood glucose monitoring may be necessary based on risk factors for diabetes.

Individuals are urged to speak to their doctors to map out a health screening schedule specific to their needs.



PMC Home Care Services

Providence Home Care staff include (front) Kathy Mohlfeld, Joanna Rayford, Nancy Abts and Miranda Long. (back) Chrissy McGhee, Cher Reeg, Dawn Bird, Terri Munter and Madge Bruflat. Not pictured, Kendra Paasch.

Common side effects of medications and supplements discussed

Health professionals recommend a bevy of medications to their patients when they the benefits of such remedies outweigh the possible risks. The same can be said for vaccinations and other health therapies, such as vitamin and mineral supplementation. While supplements and medications are safe when taken as directed, they still have the potential to cause some unwanted side effects .

Over-the-counter medicines, prescriptions or even herbal dietary supplements can cause side effects. WebMD notes that most of these effects are minor and may only be a temporary inconvenience. But some side effects may be

more serious. Recognizing common side effects may not make them easier to confront, but it can give people an idea of what to expect. WebMD, the DNA testing firm Sequencing and the healthcare services research experts at Sehat report that the following are some common side effects of medications and supplements.

Drowsiness

Drowsiness is often associated with antihistamines, anti-tussive (cough) medicines and muscle relaxants. Drowsiness can be exacerbated if medications are mixed with alcohol.

Skin rashes and dermatitis

Some topical medications, supplements and other medicines may lead

to rashes or itchiness. A rash may be an indication of an allergic reaction. Severe allergic skin reactions may warrant cessation of certain medications and such side effects



should be discussed with a doctor immediately. Vaccines also may cause pain or itching at injection sites, but that irritation tends to recede quickly.

Confusion or restlessness

Medications such as decongestants may increase blood pressure and contribute to confusion, restlessness, and even insomnia. Decongestants, when taken in high doses, also can cause an intoxicating high, which is why they are so heavily regulated.

Weight gain

Certain medications, particularly those that adjust hormone levels like contraceptives and many anti-anxiety and antidepressant medications, can lead to weight gain.

Medications and supplements are

often the most effective way to help individuals confront issues regarding their physical and mental health. However, if any side effects become bothersome, individuals should speak with a healthcare provider to find out if there is an alternative or if the medication should be discontinued.

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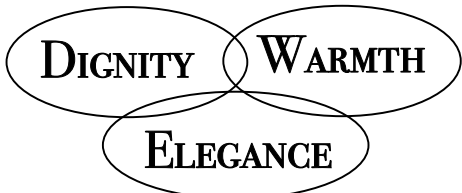
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Stop In & See For Yourself

How aging adults can maintain a healthy weight

Calorie-counting and watching one's weight is often seen as a young person's game. But even aging men and women should recognize the importance of maintaining a healthy weight.

Older adults may experience weight gain or unintentional weight loss. Understanding how to address each in healthy ways is important.

Weight loss tips

More than two-thirds of Americans, including adults age 65 and older, are



overweight and obese, according to U.S. News & World Report. A combination of factors can contribute to weight gain in older adults, including a slower metabolism and a tendency to be more sedentary with age. Empty nesters also may be less likely to cook their own meals, relying on convenience foods — some of which may be high in fat and/or calories.

Sustained healthy weight at any age is linked to improved heart health, mental health benefits like increased self-confi-

dence, healthy joints, and much more. These tips can help aging individuals maintain healthy weights.

- Incorporate strength or resistance training into your weekly routine. Hormone production slows down as the body ages, and that may result in a loss of muscle mass. Lifting weights or engaging in resistance training with elastic bands or body weight can restore muscle tone and speed up metabolism. Adults should aim for strength training

old can't eat the same way he or she did at age 30 or 40. Nutritionists say that, with every decade that passes, people generally need about 100 fewer calories a day to maintain their weights. Cutting calories slowly and steadily helps people maintain healthy weights, especially when they couple this with exercise. Avoiding malnutrition-related weight loss

Malnutrition is a common component in unintentional weight loss in aging populations. Reduction in senses of smell and taste, smaller appetites and lack of desire to make meals can contribute to malnutrition and weight loss. Underlying health problems also

may lead to unwanted and unhealthy weight loss. Tracking weight loss and getting sufficient nutrients is vital to aging adults' overall health.

A study published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that having a body mass index at the lower end of the recommended range for adults increased risk for mortality more so than being overweight. Individuals whose BMI is less than 23 could be putting themselves in jeopardy.

Older adults need to adjust their routines as they age in order to maintain healthy weights. Such adjustments can reduce seniors' risk for disease and improve their quality of life.

Great holiday gifts for retirees who can't wait to travel

Retirement provides a chance for adults who have worked throughout their lives to take a step back, relax and enjoy the fruits of their labors. Though the most indelible image associated with retirement might once have been a rocking chair, modern retirees like to get up and go, and holiday shoppers can take that joie de vivre into consideration as they look for the perfect gift for retirees who can't wait to fly the friendly skies or hit the open road.



- **Maps:** It might seem simple, but roadmaps can be an ideal gift for retirees. A recent poll from RBC Wealth Management found that 63 percent of Americans age 50 and older say travel is an important retirement goal. Roadmaps of their own country or a foreign country can help seniors plan their dream vacations. Seniors can study maps and create their own routes as they visit popular tourist attractions and find lesser known locales along the way.
 - **Vouchers/gift cards:** Airline vouchers can inspire retirees to take to the skies and visit locales that have long taken up real estate on their bucket lists. If seniors prefer to take to the open road, hotel vouchers or Visa gift cards that can be spent anywhere that accepts credit cards can help pay for gas, meals or entry to popular parks and tourist attractions.
 - **Projector and portable screen:** Retirees may want to get away from it all, but that doesn't mean they have to leave everything behind. A projector and portable screen can let on-the-go seniors enjoy movie night under the stars or watch their favorite teams even when they're far from home. This can be an especially good gift for retirees who are anxious to gas up their RV and leave home behind for a few weeks.
 - **Lifetime pass to world-renowned parks:** All United States citizens or permanent residents are eligible for the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Senior Pass, which provides access to more than 2,000 recreation sites across the country. Those sites are managed by federal agencies like the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Bureau of Reclamation, among others. A similar system is in place in Canada, where adults age 65 and up can gain unlimited admission for a full year to more than 80 Parks Canada locations across the country.
 - **Tablet:** Of course, retirees may still want to enjoy some of the comforts of home while they're off in parts unknown. A new tablet can help traveling retirees read the latest bestsellers and stay in touch with family and friends via video conferencing apps like Zoom. Many campgrounds and hotels now provide free WiFi to guests, so a tablet can be just what on-the-go retirees need to stay connected to life back home.
- Holiday shoppers can make the season bright for their favorite retirees who can't wait to spend their newfound free time traveling the world.

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The origins of New Year's Eve traditions

Traditions are the glue that hold many celebrations together. Individuals and families embrace many customs that serve as the script for commemorating year-end holidays. Some celebrants may adhere to traditions without really knowing how they began or why they continue. Here is a closer look at some of the most popular traditions tied to New Year's Eve, both domestically and around the world.

Drinking champagne

The use of champagne for celebrations is rooted in the Christian ritual of consuming wine during the Eucharist. In the year 496, a wine from the Champagne region of France was offered during the baptism of the Frankish warrior Clovis, according to the Champagne Committee of France. It then became customary for champagne to be used at religious events like consecrations and at coronations or soirees. Eventually the tradition became associated with secular rituals, such as celebrating the new year.

Food

People of Japanese heritage might eat soba noodles on New Year's Eve. The Toshikoshi Soba, which means "year crossing buckwheat noodle," denotes the crossing from one year to the next. Nibbling the noodles represent traveling



from one year to the next as well as letting go of the previous year's regrets. In Spain, people gobble grapes to bring good luck in the coming year. The goal is to eat 12 green grapes during the 12 remaining seconds until the New Year. Those able to do so will have 12 months of good fortune.

Dropping the ball

Revelers have long watched the giant ball drop in New York City's Times Square in person and on television. This tradition may be rooted in the custom of sailors using "time balls" to set their own timepieces while at sea. These chronometers were employed by using a spyglass to scan the harbor looking for balls that were dropped into the water at certain times, PBS reports. The first ball was installed in 1829 in Portsmouth, England. The Times Square ball was first used in 1907, according to the Times

Square Alliance.

Making resolutions

Historians trace the making of resolutions to the Ancient Babylonians. Citizens made spoken resolutions during their new year festival known as "Akitu." This ritual required making an oath to the sitting or new king. Romans also swore oaths of loyalty to the emperor when the New Year started.

Fireworks and noisemakers

Fireworks are a big part of celebrations and are not to be outdone on New Year's Eve. Fireworks were invented in the seventh century in China. According

to Anthony Aveni, an astronomer and anthropologist at Colgate University, the fireworks were designed to ward off evil spirits. In cultures around the world, fireworks, banging drums and other efforts were used to chase away spooky creatures, especially during the transitional period that is the passing of the new year. Today fireworks and noisemakers are employed not for scaring away spirits, but rather to add to the revelry.

New Year's Eve traditions abound, and many of these annual customs have interesting origin stories.

When to travel this holiday season

Many people travel to see family and friends during the holiday season, and the 2021 holiday season figures to be an especially busy one for travel.

Celebrants are anxious to spend the holidays with their loved ones in 2021 after canceling such plans a year ago, when the COVID-19 pandemic forced many families to scrap traditional gatherings and spend holidays like Thanksgiving, Chanukah and Christmas at home. As vaccinations rates continue to grow across the globe, the likelihood of a very busy holiday travel season increases as well. For instance, Club Med reported a significant uptick in holiday season bookings as early as May. Club Med bookings around Thanksgiving had already increased by 18 percent in May, while bookings around Christmas had increased by 9 percent.

That bodes well for the travel industry, though it could mean travelers have to do some significant advance planning if they intend to leave home this holiday season. In anticipation of crowded roadways and busy airports, travelers may want to review these holiday travel facts and figures from a 2019 analysis from the AAA Automotive Group.

- The 10-day period between Dec. 21 and Jan. 1 featured a record number of American travelers in 2019. Roughly 115.6 million people traveled in that period, and that number could be even greater in 2021 as the world continues to emerge from the pandemic. AAA reports that more than 104 million of those travelers traveled by car, so travelers who want to drive should keep that in mind and potentially look to hit the road prior to Dec. 21.

- People traveling by car in or near major cities around the Christmas holi-

day should know that the days after Christmas tend to be the busiest in such locales, though the delays pale in comparison to those on the day before Thanksgiving. For example, the peak congestion period in Chicago around the Christmas holiday in 2019 was between 4:45 p.m. and 6:45 p.m. on Dec. 26. However, the delays during that time period were just 1.3 times greater than normal. While that's still nothing to celebrate, it's a far cry from the more significant delays travelers can expect on the day preceding Thanksgiving.



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