

How to cope with almost anything

Care for your Christmas tree

Having a real tree adds to the festive atmosphere, but sweeping up pine needles is less appealing. Needles are more likely to stay on the tree if you:

- **Buy from a member of the British Christmas Tree Growers' Association.** Call 0131 664 1100 or visit www.bctga.co.uk to find one near you.
- **Choose a Fraser or Nordman fir, or a Scots pine** – they are less prone to dropping their needles.
- **Test how fresh a tree is** by running your hand along one of its branches from trunk to tip – if it's fresh, hardly any needles will fall off.
- **Once indoors,** cut 2cm off the base of the trunk and place it in a water-retaining stand, available from garden centres. It will need two litres of water a day.

If you're spending Christmas abroad

- ❗ **Don't wrap presents before you travel.** You may be asked to open them for airport security checks. Pack a supply of wrapping paper or gift bags, sticky tape and ribbon instead.
- ❗ **Check the customs website of the country you're travelling to** if it's outside the EU. You may be liable to pay duty on gifts bought in the UK and there may be restrictions on taking food gifts into the country.

Scalds and burns

- ❗ **Cool the affected area** by holding it under a slow-running cold tap or immersing in cold water for at least 10 minutes or until the pain subsides.
- ❗ **Gently remove rings, watches and belts** before swelling sets in.
- ❗ **If the burn isn't serious,** apply a sterile dressing with a bandage to dry skin.
- ❗ **Don't use sticking plaster or ointment** or touch the burn with cotton wool or fluffy material.
- ❗ **If the burn is on a child,** is bigger than the size of the victim's hand or is on the face, arms, feet or genitals, send the casualty to the A&E department of your local hospital or call 999.

Food poisoning

The most common symptoms of food poisoning are nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea and stomach pain, often accompanied by fever, aches and pains and fatigue. Most infections last 24 to 48 hours.

- ❗ **Drink plenty of water** to prevent dehydration.
- ❗ **Don't eat until vomiting attacks have finished.** When you feel able, eat small amounts of freshly cooked rice, pasta or potatoes.
- ❗ **Be meticulous about washing your hands** after going to the loo.
- ❗ **Avoid preparing food.**
- ❗ **Send for help** if symptoms last longer than 48 hours, if there is blood in stools or if the sufferer is a baby, elderly person or pregnant woman.

First aid kit

Make sure the bathroom cabinet is well stocked with plasters, sterile dressings, bandages, antiseptic cream, paracetamol and indigestion tablets.

Christmas visitors?

Invest in an inflatable bed. The Aerobed Classic double bed, £79.99 from Argos, scored highest in our recent tests. Good for unexpected guests, too.



Don't blow your Christmas cool – 3 disaster-fixing tips

If you forgot to turn on the oven, don't panic. Turn it on as soon as you can and serve guests brunch with bucks fizz to tide them over. Don't be tempted to increase the oven temperature and cook the turkey for a shorter time – you risk cooking only the outside without killing bacteria in the cavity.

Lighting the Christmas pudding is the grand finale to lunch, but it can be tricky. Heat some brandy in a pan over a low heat for about a minute and transfer it to a metal ladle. Light the brandy while holding the ladle over the pudding in case of any spills, then quickly pour over the pudding.

Carve the turkey with a sharpened knife. If you're not confident using a professional steel or whetstone, try the Fiskars Lifestyle Roll Sharp Sharpener, £7.49 (01656 655595), or Global Minosharp Universal Sharpener, £39 (available from Colanders: 01707 391891; colanderscookshop.co.uk).