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COVID-19's Impact on Nursing Home Abuse

This past spring, in order to quell the COVID-19 devastation in nursing homes, the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued health and safety guidelines. Among them were strict limitations on in-person visitations, with states having the final word.

Initially, phone calls, videoconferencing, FaceTiming/Skyping, and letters were typically the only forms of permissible contact. Options eventually expanded to "window visits" and socially distanced outdoor visits at some nursing homes.

In-person family member visitations have always been a bulwark against nursing home abuse/neglect, but COVID-19 has temporarily sidelined or interrupted that line of defense. Though COVID-19 has muddied the waters, vigilant family members may still be able to detect signs of abuse through the above-mentioned means of communication. Be alert for signs of abuse/neglect, such as if your loved one ...



- withdraws from family or friends.
- doesn't respond to questions about their care.
- expresses fear of nursing home staff.
- exhibits drastic behavioral changes.
- displays unexplained weight loss, poor personal hygiene, or other changes in physical appearance.

In addition, if the nursing home restricts your access to speak with your loved one or won't permit private conversations, consider it a potential red flag.

In September, the CMS issued guidelines for indoor visits if protocols are followed and certain criteria are met, having recognized the emotional and mental-health toll of resident isolation. However, not all states or regions will be able to meet the criteria, which means visitations will continue to be hindered.

COVID-19 has made life difficult on many fronts. If you suspect your loved one is a victim of nursing home abuse/neglect, report it to state protective services and contact our office to protect their rights. •



Crustless Jalapeño Mini Quiches

Servings: 24 mini quiches; prep time: 10 minutes; cook time: 25 minutes; total time: 35 minutes

These crustless jalapeño mini quiches are packed with flavor, low in carbs, high in protein, and the perfect bite-sized holiday appetizer to serve at your next family gathering!

INGREDIENTS

- 6 eggs
- 1/2 cup chopped broccoli
- 1/2 cup chopped red pepper
- 1/4 cup chopped jalapeños, deseeded
- 1/2 cup chopped red onion
- 1/4 cup grated cheddar cheese
- 1/8 cup milk
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350 °F.
2. Prepare all veggies by chopping as small as possible. Whisk eggs, milk, veggies, cheese, salt, and pepper in a large bowl.
3. Grease mini muffin cups with olive oil, and carefully pour egg mixture into egg cups, filling to within a couple of millimeters from the top.
4. Cook in the oven for 25 minutes.
5. Let cool and serve on a large serving platter.

(Recipe courtesy of Taylor Stinson at <https://thegirlonbloor.com>.) •



Misconceptions About the Three Wise Men

The three Wise Men are fixtures in the account of Jesus' birth, but the Bible doesn't offer a lot of details about them. Many tidbits we're familiar with today originated with Gnostic writers during the four centuries following Christ's birth. Gnostics claimed to have special knowledge and enjoyed spicing up scriptural accounts or concocting new stories. Following are a few misconceptions.

First, the Bible does not state there were three Wise Men. "Three" likely stemmed from the three types of gifts presented to the newborn king: gold (signifying kingship), frankincense (divinity), and myrrh (death). The New Testament does not identify the Wise Men as kings (as some Christmas carols do). They were likely royal advisers.

The Bible says the Wise Men were "from the East." Most scholars believe Persia, as many Jews lived in that region. Other commonly mentioned countries (Mediterranean/African) don't match up, directionally speaking. The Wise Men likely did not ride camels either. Camels were mainly pack animals at that time; wealthy travelers from Persia probably would have journeyed on Arabian horses.

The names of the Wise Men were supposedly Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar; however, the Bible is silent on this matter. Marco Polo's 13th-century writings contain a report from a Persian town that speaks of three kings by these names who took gifts on a journey to visit a newborn prophet.

Many artistic renderings depict the Wise Men worshipping the newborn king alongside the shepherds. The shepherds visited the night of the birth; however, the Bible indicates that the Wise Men visited Jesus in his parents' abode. The time gap between Jesus' birth and their visitation ranges from 12 days to two years, depending on which Bible historian you talk to. •

Make Online Holiday Shopping More Secure

According to the credit bureau Experian, 43 percent of online-shopping identity theft in 2018 occurred during the holiday season. Digging out from identity theft — financially and emotionally — can be a nightmare. Here are some ways to shop online more safely.

Steer clear of public Wi-Fi. It's easy for hackers to intercept personal data you send and receive. If you insist, install a VPN (virtual private network) on your device, which encrypts information to befuddle would-be cyberthieves.

Create strong, unique passwords. Use at least 10 characters with a mix of letters, numbers, and symbols; avoid incorporating personal information (e.g., birth dates, kids' names, etc.); don't use the same password for multiple accounts; and utilize a password manager app to store and secure passwords.

Only shop on SSL-certified online shopping sites, which are identified by the "https" in their web addresses (the "s" stands for "secure") and the lock symbol in the address bar. These sites employ encryption to safeguard your information.

Download mobile shopping apps from reputable stores only, such as Google Play, the App Store, the Amazon App Store, and Galaxy Apps. Unfamiliar apps may contain malicious software.

Beware of phishing emails/texts from unknown senders with special offers too good to be true. Don't click on links, and don't open attachments — viruses, fake websites, etc.

Closely monitor all financial accounts, and sign up for email/text alerts.

Victims of identity theft should immediately contact the credit bureaus Equifax, TransUnion, and Experian; creditors (credit card providers, utilities, cable company, etc.); financial institutions; and law enforcement officials.

Tracking down identity thieves can be challenging, but third parties may have been negligent by failing to properly protect personal information. If you fall prey to identity theft, contact our office for guidance. •

December 2020 Notable Dates

Dec. 1 — Eat a Red Apple Day **Dec. 4** — Santa's List Day **Dec. 8** — National Brownie Day
Dec. 16 — Chocolate-Covered Anything Day **Dec. 21** — Crossword Puzzle Day
Dec. 23 — Festivus **Dec. 27** — Fruitcake Day

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'... to Grandmother's House We Go'



The holiday season is in full swing, and that means drivers should take extra precautions when heading out. According to AAA, roughly 115 million Americans will be doing holiday-related traveling from December 21 through New Year's Day. Long-distance trips (50+ miles) rise by 23 percent compared to other days of the year (Bureau of Transportation Statistics).

Increased traffic volume inevitably leads to a rise in accidents, injuries, and fatalities, but other factors come into play as well. Alcohol, unfortunately, is a problem year-round, but it's heightened with holiday festivities. A designated driver, rideshare service, or taxi is critical for those who have imbibed excessively.

Aggressive driving and acts of road rage are also more frequent over the holidays. Don't respond to aggressive drivers verbally or with gestures, which can escalate the situation. To keep your own blood from boiling, allow plenty of time to reach your destination (which also diminishes the temptation of speeding), check ahead for construction situations, avoid times of heaviest traffic if possible, and take a deep breath or two.

Winter weather and road conditions can be unpredictable. Snow, sleet, black ice, freezing rain, and refrozen melt-off can put a damper on traveling; short days don't help either. Check the weather forecast when planning your trip, and make sure your vehicle is properly maintained to minimize danger (good tires, topped-off washer fluid, properly functioning lights/signals, etc.).

In addition, prioritize sleep the night before traveling, take breaks on long trips, always wear seatbelts, never text while driving, and drive defensively.

If you are injured by a negligent driver this holiday season (or anytime), contact our office to protect your rights. ●