

The Daily Tar Heel



Volume 102, Issue 125
101 years of editorial freedom
Serving the students and the University community since 1893

Chapel Hill, North Carolina
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1994

News/Features/Arts/Sports 962-0245
Business/Advertising 962-1163
© 1994 DTH Publishing Corp. All rights reserved.

Santa(r) Heels



Santa and a few of his faithful elves ride down Main Street in Carrboro during last Saturday's Christmas Parade. The jolly old elf in red rode the day's last float.

Hangovers Not Only Cause of Holiday Pains

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO — By the 12th day of Christmas, the holidays brought to me: 12 last-minute errands; 11 chocolate bonbons; 10 squabbling relatives; nine perfume samples; eight cups of coffee; seven strings of blinking tree lights; six ounces of red wine; five hours of sleep; four walnut cheese balls; three whining youngsters; two smoke-filled rooms — and a headache you wouldn't believe.

Dr. Seymour Diamond would believe it. As executive director of the National Headache Foundation, he knows the stress and altered lifestyle patterns of the holidays are prime causes of severe headache.

"From Thanksgiving to New Year's, we see a greater incidence of tension-type headaches and migraines," Diamond said. "At my private headache clinic in Chicago, we treat about 40 percent more patients than we would in a normal 40-day period — we're busy."

Family stresses and long lines in hot, noisy department stores are enough to trigger tension headaches even in people who aren't headache-prone.

Diamond recommends shopping early. Failing that, he said: "Practicing relaxation and stretching techniques — such as neck rolls and slow deep breaths — is a good way to release built-up tension."

Altered sleep patterns also play a role in headaches. Late-night parties can mean too little sleep, while time off can woo people into sleeping late — which contributes to headache-causing carbon dioxide buildup in the blood.

"Try to go to sleep and wake up the same time every day, whether you are going to work or not," Diamond said.

For migraine sufferers, the holidays are a minefield. A spritz of perfume at the cosmetics counter can trigger a migraine. So can the blinking lights of a Christmas tree or cigarette smoke at a New Year's Eve party.

"If you have to use the side door of the department store to avoid the perfume counter, use it," he said. "Go only to smoke-free restaurants. There are also some scent-free restaurants now where they don't allow perfume."

Food and drink can trigger a migraine as well. Doctors say culprits often contain chemical substances called tyramines, and tyramine-laden foods are everywhere: They include chocolate, walnuts and aged cheeses.

"And liver pate, don't forget liver pate," Diamond said. "It's at every holiday party — and it's the worst."

Caffeine can set off a migraine, as can red wine.

Speaking of alcohol, the third category of holiday headache — the hangover — is completely avoidable: Don't drink. For those who do, Diamond has some tips:

- Drink slowly and in moderation.
- Since wines, whiskies, brandies and most rums are high in headache-causing impurities called congeners, vodka or gin is safer — especially if mixed with fruit juice.
- Eat toast slathered with honey after drinking since honey, like some fruit juices, contains a sugar that helps metabolize alcohol.