

December 22, 2020



School of Medicine  
Department of Pediatrics

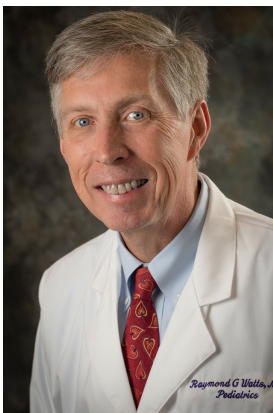
## LSU Pediatrics Tuesday Tidbits

Welcome to the Department of Pediatrics' weekly email blast designed to deliver important department information straight to your inbox.

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### *A Message from Our Chairman...*



Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Joyous Kwanzaa, Happy Bodhi Day and Happy Yalda Night.

As a descendent of Western European (English) immigrants to America, I have spent my life celebrating the Christmas Holiday each December, commemorating the birth of Jesus, the Christian Messiah. My traditions include decorating with Christmas trees, Nativity Scenes, colored lights, evergreen garlands and wreaths. My family sets aside time for religious services, large family gatherings and meals, and the exchange of an inordinate number of gifts. For many Christians, Christmas is a time to celebrate our many gifts, those we love, help others, and welcome baby Jesus to our world.

Christmas is the dominant December holiday and celebration in most of the United States and certainly in Louisiana and New Orleans.

However, other cultures and religions around the globe celebrate alternative holidays and festivals in December. In the spirit of greater inclusivity and

cultural awareness, I am trying to learn more about other celebrations. A few are listed below (apologies in advance for any mistakes-I lean heavily on Wikipedia for much of the content):

**Kwanzaa** is a week-long celebration honoring African Heritage and focuses on Seven Principles (Nguzo Saba in Swahili). The seven basic values of African culture are: unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity and faith. Seven candles highlighting the Seven Principles is a common symbol of the Kwanzaa celebration. A common greeting is "Joyous Kwanzaa".

**Hanukkah** is a Jewish Festival lasting eight nights which commemorates a successful Maccabee revolt against the Seleucid Empire many centuries ago. Known as the Festival of Lights, the commemoration celebrates the purification of the Jewish Temple when the wicks of the menorah miraculously burned for eight days even though there was only enough oil for one day's candle. Customs include lighting a nine-candle candelabra (the Menorah), daily prayers, exchanging of gifts, playing the game of dreidel, and eating latkes, sufganiyot and dairy foods.

**Bodhi Day** is a Buddhist holiday that commemorates the day that Buddha experienced enlightenment. According to tradition, Siddhartha (Buddha) had recently forsaken years of extreme ascetic practices and resolved to sit under a Bodhi tree (*Ficus religiosa*), and simply meditate until he found the root of suffering, and how to liberate oneself from it. Services and traditions vary amongst Buddhist sects, but all such services commemorate the Buddha's achievement of Nirvana, and what this means for Buddhism today. Individuals may choose to commemorate the event through additional meditation, study of the Dharma, chanting of Buddhist texts (sutras), or performing kind acts towards other beings. Some Buddhists celebrate with a traditional meal of tea, cake, and readings.

**Yaldā Night or Chelleh Night** is a Persian winter solstice festival celebrated on the "longest and darkest night of the year." According to the calendar, this corresponds to the night of December 20/21 in the Northern Hemisphere. The longest and darkest night of the year is a time when friends and family gather together to eat, drink and read poetry until well after midnight. Fruits and nuts are eaten and pomegranates and watermelons are particularly significant. The red color in these fruits symbolizes the crimson hues of dawn and glow of life.

I am struck with the similarities in the various December celebrations across many cultures, not the differences: celebrating family, celebrating our many gifts, highlighting our path forward from darkness to light, reaching out to help others, overcoming suffering through our own actions and thoughts, finding goodness in our world. In particular, the Seven Principles of African Culture strike me as a description of the LSU Department of Pediatrics: unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity and faith.

So, Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Joyous Kwanzaa, Happy Bodhi Day and Happy Yalda Night. I look forward to a joyous and successful 2021.

Raymond G. Watts, MD

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## Dr. Watts' Year in Pictures and Holiday Celebration 2020

In case you missed Dr. Watts' holiday presentation last Friday,  
take a look here:

<https://youtu.be/jc2F2tsWu7s>

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There will be no Tuesday Tidbits next week.  
Enjoy the holiday break!



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Submit information to the next Tuesday Tidbits