

Santa's Doctor Weighs In: Is He Medically Fit to Serve?



By *Jamie Wells, M.D.* — December 21, 2016



Credit: Shutterstock [1]

Official Health Report for SANTA CLAUS

CLAUS, SANTA

One St. Nicholas Icy Drive

North Pole, Arctic

Date of Birth (DOB): Immortal

Medical Record #: 12-24-0000

This letter reflects the official summary of **SANTA CLAUS'** (aka St. Nick) recent health visit to determine medical fitness to serve as himself on Christmas Eve in a global capacity. As the Director of Medicine and a Board-Certified physician at the American Council on Science and Health (ACSH), I can attest to his excellent health over the last decade plus.

Understanding and opting to waive his rights under the HIPAA Privacy Rule, he underscores the importance of being a good role model and strongly desires to educate the public about ways we can all improve our health and well-being.

SANTA CLAUS is regularly evaluated at ACSH fully compliant with his routine care and check-ups. Since his last pre-Christmas annual physical examination, he was seen for a minor leg laceration secondary to a rusty nail he encountered while climbing down a chimney. Proper wound care was implemented and due to an up-to-date immunization status he did not require a tetanus vaccine booster at the time. His clinical course was uneventful.

This Fall, he battled his usual few upper respiratory infections acquired from listening to countless sick and well children's wishes on his lap. We discussed infection control measures and his frequent hand washing kept these to a minimum while his jolly spirit, as always, boosted his immune protection. "Ho ho ho," he added, "goes with the job and I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world."

Mr. Claus endures the occasional back strain from lifting and carrying a large sack of toys in and out of his workshop, sleigh, homes throughout the planet and across diverse terrain. He presents today with no complaints reporting, "Mrs. Claus is a masterful inventor and we enjoy in our spare time re-engineering the design of our holiday equipment. Her latest creation reduces the pressure on my lower spine and seems to do the trick. She also has me stretching more and I am careful to take frequent breaks while making sure I bend the right way to avoid injury."

His family history is negative for medical illness. Mr. Claus lacks any significant medical history, requires no medications and affirms no drug or tobacco use. Former renditions of the merry and affable gentleman depict a pipe, but he clarifies that was merely an infrequent recreational activity hundreds of years ago. He had no hospitalizations or emergency room visits. No surgical history. No relevant medical history or allergies to medications or foods.

A thorough review of organ systems was unremarkable except for detailing transient eye fatigue after writing lists and rechecking them twice.

He acknowledges ingesting an excessive amount of milk and cookies on each Christmas Eve, but reports a more modest intake throughout the rest of the year. He admits increasing his vegetable consumption would be worthwhile and drinks plenty of water to stay hydrated. His activity includes weekly treks across the frozen sea to visit and explore with his polar bear buddies. Sleep can be a challenge during his peak holiday season, but otherwise is restful and regular.

Mr. Claus resides on the North Pole with his wife—describing a joyful marriage—and eight family reindeer. Getting to his workshop which he conveys as a fun, social and loving atmosphere requires a nice walk. He tries to hasten his pace to amp up his physical exertion. Fully aware of the challenges of his daily climate, he attributes his lack of medical issues to remaining properly attired, employing preventive measures, maintaining a long beard and believes his "round belly that shakes when I laugh like a bowl full of jelly" keeps him warm.

The Winter Solstice today is no big deal for him as he is so used to the vacillating and persistent darkness of the local weather having adapted innumerable years ago to these now predictable

changes.

As CEO of all things Santa, he manages a legion of faithful elves. Spreading cheer and good-humor is their mantra. He explains “exuberance begets exuberance” so mandating glee has never been a much needed company policy. Making toys year-round keeps him young and he is grateful this calling has never felt like a job, instead it constantly energizes him. Once a year on Christmas Eve, he travels nonstop great distances at varying altitudes, temperatures and time zones. We addressed ways to prevent [altitude sickness](#) [2] and ensure [avoidance of hypothermia](#) [3] and sleep deprivation.

He commutes to the New Igloo School at the Arctic Circle where he takes a different course each term to keep his mind active and constantly learning. The next session kicks off after New Year’s as he is enrolled in famed Professor Rudolph’s “Conflict Resolution of Reindeers” seminar. He hoped to have gotten into the class this fall, but being that his job intensifies then he had to defer it to the spring semester.

On physical examination today, he was well-appearing, jovial with a perky, jolly affect and portly, unchanged physique in no acute distress. His vital signs were normal and stable. His vision screen revealed a need to fine tune his eyeglass prescription, so a refraction was performed readily achieving 20/20 vision bilaterally. His laboratory studies were within normal limits—of particular note, the cholesterol panel, thyroid functions, insulin and blood sugar levels were perfect. Among the pertinent positives, an EKG and other testing revealed the cardiac status of a teenager—which is always medically mystifying despite being his baseline. He handily passed his mini-mental status exam and cognitive testing illustrating a superior, intact neurological system. The remainder being unremarkable.

Preventive Care Recommendations...

Longevity: Given that Santa is ageless, it seems his cherubic and jolly nature along with a loving, rewarding marriage contribute to this longevity. The science supports this as pessimism can be an impediment, for example. Discussed with the patient maintenance of this attitude, continued routine follow-up care and provided him materials for review on the topic: [Pessimism Kills...Slowly](#) [4], [Population Health Tied to Well-Being \(Shocker!\)](#) [5]

1. [Dementia Risk in Aging](#) [6]: Recommended to continue his memory exercises (e.g. list-making) and enrichment courses and hobbies to reduce his risks of dementia.
2. [Cardiovascular Health](#) [7]: Continue playing with his reindeers and polar bears as animals reduce heart rate and blood pressure. Keep toxic extreme stress to a minimum, extensive anticipatory guidance given regarding the [surge of stress hormones and their effect on multiple organ systems](#) [8].

Mental Health/Stress Management: Reviewed the [many health benefits of pets](#) [9], optimism, regular exercise and good sleep hygiene. Further advised on the importance of continued healthy lifestyle choices. Provided resources on the [hazards of toxic extreme stress](#) [10] and ways to enhance well-being.

Dietary Guidance: Despite no signs of diabetes, heart disease or stroke risk on today's exam, Santa Claus admits to struggling with his weight and is committed to learning about healthier eating and food choices for himself and his family, including [his reindeers](#) [11]. He was referred to ACSH's Senior Nutrition Fellow, Dr. Ruth Kava.

Occupational Health: We addressed ways to manage winter safety, [prevent altitude disorders](#) [12], injury and the negative potential impact of shift work sleep disruptions. Since his work to him feels like a permanent vacation, he absorbs manageable stress levels.

Environmental Health: Mr. Claus is committed to remaining a [non-smoker](#) [13]. [Practices sun safety](#) [14].

In Conclusion...

Santa Claus is in phenomenal health lacking any significant interval changes. He is medically fit to serve the world this Christmas without reservation.

Respectfully,

Jamie Wells, MD, FAAP

Director of Medicine, American Council on Science and Health

110 East 42nd Street, Suite 1300

New York, NY 10017

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