

## Some healthy gift ideas

For many people Christmas has deep religious significance; for others, it's simply a time to relax and enjoy a few days off work.

But for almost everyone, this time of year has traditionally become one of celebration.

Throughout so many societies it is commonplace to exchange gifts or simply "season's greetings", and to express sentiments of peace and goodwill.

However, it seems sometimes, there is much more emphasis on the gifts than the goodwill; with more expensive and sophisticated gadgets being among the most fancied gift suggestions.

Mobile phones can now provide just about every service imaginable; even facilitating phone calls! And miniature music machines can contain thousands of songs or instrumentals downloaded from computers. This year, global positioning navigational systems are the latest "must have" car accessory.

But, maybe this year might be different. Despite the Commonwealth Government's attempt to play Santa Claus early and its encouragement for us all to spend up big, with concern about the current status of the economy, there might be greater consideration given to the cost of Christmas gifts.

Wishes of good health usually accompany greetings at this time of year; so, perhaps some healthy gift ideas could be worth a thought as well.

The original gifts of Christmas were reported to be gold, frankincense and myrrh. These items are not likely to be on too many shopping lists today, but they are certainly health related items.

As well as its value as a precious metal, gold has also been used in healing. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, gold cordials (gold mixed with alcohol) were prescribed for such ailments as melancholy, fainting, swooning and fevers. Although, there is no evidence that these treatments were in any way successful.

Frankincense, as the name implies, has for much of its 4,000 year history been used for its aromatic qualities. Today it is still in wide use as a component of perfumes and toiletries. Records of its medicinal use date back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, when it was recommended for gout, catarrh, colic and gastrointestinal haemorrhage.

In a pharmaceutical sense myrrh seems to have the best credentials. As recently as 50 years ago tincture of myrrh was an ingredient of pain relieving mixtures prescribed by Australian doctors. In Hebrew tradition, myrrh was often mixed with wine and given to a condemned man as an anaesthetic. These days myrrh is valued in some cultures for its antiseptic, antifungal and anti-inflammatory properties.

Today you may not be able to access these middle eastern perfumes and pain relievers quite so easily, but there are still some healthy options.

How about a first aid kit? There are ready prepared varieties for work, home or keeping in the car; or your pharmacist can help you tailor-make one for your own personal needs.

If you're still electronically minded, a home-use blood pressure measuring device (called a sphygmomanometer by the medicos) is a useful gift for someone whose blood pressure might need monitoring. And for people with diabetes the now miniature size blood glucose measuring machines are a must – they're not much bigger than the "i-pod" type music machine, and with the added bonus of no risk of industrial deafness with constant use.

Of course, if jewellery is what you'd like to give, or receive, you could consider something from Medic Alert. Just about anyone will benefit from the gift of a Medic Alert bracelet or necklet; but it will be especially helpful for those people with food, drug, chemical or insect allergies; people with an implant such as a pacemaker; people with conditions such as Alzheimer's or Crohn's or Parkinson's disease; or people with special needs or on special medication. Medic Alert is much more than a piece of jewellery; it's the ultimate in patient protection in emergency situations or unforeseen adverse events.

Ask at your local Self Care Pharmacy for more information. Phone the Pharmaceutical Society on 1300 369 772 or check out the website [www.psa.org.au/pharmacies](http://www.psa.org.au/pharmacies) for the nearest location.