

Tools for Life – Weekly Health & Safety Meeting



Home Healthy - Home Safe

December 2020

Celebrating Holidays during COVID-19

This 2020 holiday season will be unlike any we've experienced before. With COVID-19 cases rising throughout the country, we need to rethink our usual traditions when planning holiday gatherings. You may not know anyone with Coronavirus, or you believe your risk is low, but we know that younger people and those without pre-existing health conditions do get the virus and can become very ill. Asymptomatic people can unknowingly spread the virus to friends and family, many of whom may be more vulnerable to serious complications. While you most likely have COVID overload and are tired of taking precautions, now going into fall and winter is actually the time to be extra cautious.

Celebrating with only your household members or conducting virtual holiday get-togethers instead of in-person ones are the safest ways to celebrate this year. If you decide to forgo your usual family celebration, do your best to communicate that your decisions aren't personal – it's a precaution taken out of love. Explain that you will miss the traditional holiday gathering and look forward to getting together again in the future. If, however, after careful consideration of your own COVID-19 risk and that of any loved ones in your circle, you decide to host a celebration, consider the following guidelines on how to hold safer holiday gatherings:

1. **Limit the number of guests** at your gathering based on ability to socially distance and reduce the risk of spreading between attendees.
2. **Review your guest list** for people who may be in a high-risk category or children. Think about special needs and precautions.
3. **Check your space.** Outdoor activities are safer than indoor activities but not very feasible in all parts of the country considering the weather in November and December. Is there room inside to spread out, at least six feet from people you don't live with? Increase ventilation by opening windows and doors to the extent that is safe and weather permits. Remind guests to wear warm clothes!
4. **Space out chairs** at the dining table or prepare two or more dining tables and split the gathering into groups so people don't have to sit close together or households can sit next to each other and away from other households. Think twice about hugging your relatives. Smiles and air hugs only and prepare kids ahead of time to do the same. Kids have trouble playing six feet apart, so wearing masks and frequent handwashing may be the safest plan of action. Remember: kids under two should never wear masks!
5. **Clean, clean, clean.** If you are hosting, frequently disinfect surfaces that people may encounter during their visit.
6. **Wash hands early and often.** Ask adults and kids to wash hands on arrival, before and after eating, and before they leave with soap for at least 20 seconds. If there is no access to a sink, provide hand sanitizer.
7. **Make a food plan.** Talk through details on how food will be shared.
 - The safest option is to have everyone bring their own food.
 - Limit people going in and out of the areas where food is being prepared or handled.
 - Wear a mask while preparing or serving food to others who don't live in your household.
 - If sharing, separate food ahead of time into individual servings and forgo communal bowls and utensils.
 - If serving any food, consider having one person serve all the food so that multiple people are not handling the serving utensils.
 - Use single-use options or identify one person to serve sharable items like salad dressings and condiments.
8. **After you gather,** wash hands again, and sanitize again by cleaning all surfaces that may have been touched by guests, such as tabletops, counters, doorknobs and bathroom fixtures. Also, watch for COVID-19 symptoms. Alert others at the gathering if there's a positive test among anyone in attendance.