

Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19): Guidance for Halloween and Día de los Muertos

Fall brings multiple holidays that are important to the DC community. This document provides guidance for DC residents on ways to have fun and keep our community safe from COVID-19 during the fall celebrations of Halloween and Día de los Muertos.

The COVID-19 vaccines are making it possible for society to gradually reopen and for fully vaccinated people to resume many normal activities. Compared to last year, the 2021 holiday season will allow for more gatherings with loved ones. However, we must keep in mind that many of those who participate in trick-or-treating and other fall holiday activities are children under 12 who are not yet eligible to be vaccinated. **It is the responsibility of the whole community to protect them.**

Please note that anyone experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, or who is required to isolate or quarantine¹ due to COVID-19 diagnosis or exposure, **must not attend any in-person Halloween or Día de los Muertos event** due to the risk of exposing others. Symptoms of COVID-19 may include: fever (subjective or 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit), chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea.

Fall holiday 2021 tips:

- Continue to choose your activities wisely. Understand the risk of different activities to you and your family.
- People who are unvaccinated (including children younger than 12), not yet fully vaccinated, or immunocompromised² remain at higher risk for catching COVID-19, including the Delta variant, and need to take more precautions than people who are fully vaccinated.
 - People are considered **fully vaccinated** 14 days after they received the final dose of a COVID-19 primary³ vaccination series (after the second dose of a 2-dose series, or after one dose of a single-dose vaccine).
- Activities are riskier when an area has higher levels of COVID-19 transmission⁴
- **Outdoor activities are safer than indoor activities.** It is much harder for COVID-19 to spread outside in fresh air.
- **Avoid** crowded indoor and outdoor settings.
 - Choose events that take place outside with plenty of space for people to maintain 6 feet of social distancing.
- **Avoid** events held in poorly ventilated indoor spaces.
- Choose less busy times to attend holiday activities.
- Choose to attend (or host) small gatherings instead of large gatherings.
 - Small gatherings: tend to be more intimate and informal gatherings involving family and close friends, often occurring at someone's home

¹For more information see *Guidance for People who Test Positive for COVID-19 and their Household Members* and *Guidance for Quarantine after COVID-19 Exposure* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.

² Immunocompromised means having a weakened immune system due to a medical condition or from taking medications that suppress the immune system. This includes, but is not limited to: people on chemotherapy, people with blood cancers like leukemia, people who have had an organ transplant or stem cell transplant, and people on dialysis.

³ This refers to the standard vaccine course before any extra (i.e., “booster”) doses.

⁴ For information on DC's current level of community transmission, see the *CDC Data Tracker* at covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view.

- **Large gatherings:** bring together many people from multiple households, are more likely to occur in a public space and to involve ticketing, event staff, and long-distance travel (examples: festivals, large parties)
- Before you go to an event, find out what kind of COVID-19 safety protocols the event organizers have in place. You may be able to find this information on an establishment's website or social media pages, or call ahead and ask questions.
 - If, after arriving at an event, it feels less safe than you had anticipated, **leave**.

Everyday prevention measures

- **Get vaccinated!** The COVID-19 vaccine is easily available, safe, effective, and free. Everyone eligible for the vaccine who has not yet gotten it should get vaccinated as soon as possible. Children should get vaccinated as soon as they are eligible.
 - Find out more about the COVID-19 vaccine at coronavirus.dc.gov/vaccine.
- **Stay home if you are sick**, if you have tested positive for COVID-19, or need to quarantine due to exposure to someone with COVID-19 or because of travel.
- **Masks:**
 - **Indoors:**
 - **DC has an indoor mask mandate for all people in public settings regardless of their vaccination status. This policy took effect July 31, 2021.**
 - The indoor mask mandate does not extend to indoor gatherings at private residences.
 - People who are not fully vaccinated should continue to wear masks during indoor private gatherings that include people from outside their household⁵.
 - **Outdoors:**
 - **In general, people do not need to wear masks during outdoor activities.** However, particularly in areas of substantial to high transmission⁴ CDC recommends that people who are not fully vaccinated or who are immunocompromised wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people who are not fully vaccinated⁵.
 - It is recommended to keep a mask handy during outdoor activities to put on in case the situation becomes crowded or people from outside one's household come near.
 - Fully vaccinated people may also choose to wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings if they or someone in their household is immunocompromised.
 - **A costume mask is not a substitute for a face mask.**
 - Wearing a face mask underneath a costume mask could make it difficult to breathe.
 - Consider wearing a holiday-themed face mask.
 - Children age 2 and younger should not wear masks.
 - For more information see *Mask Guidance for the General Public* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.
- **Social distancing:** People who are not fully vaccinated (including children younger than 12) or who are immunocompromised should maintain at least 6 feet of distance in any setting from people who are not part of their household⁵.
 - 10 feet of distance is recommended if raised voices, yelling, singing or physical exertion is anticipated during the activity.
 - Wearing a mask does not replace the need for social distancing.
- **Ventilation:** For indoor gatherings, improve ventilation by opening doors and windows as much as possible (safety permitting).
- **Perform frequent hand hygiene** (with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer).

⁵ Fully vaccinated parents/guardians who have unvaccinated children may choose to continue following the same precautions as unvaccinated people in settings where their children are present to set an example.

- People who are not fully vaccinated or who are immunocompromised should avoid shaking hands and physical contact with people who don't live with them. Instead wave and verbally greet people⁵.
- For more information see *Guidance for the Public (Not Fully Vaccinated)* and *Guidance for Fully Vaccinated People* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance

Safer holiday events

HALLOWEEN

Lowest risk activities: (e.g., virtual events and activities involving only your household members)

- Decorate your house and yard in a Halloween theme. Have neighborhood drive-through events where families can stay in their cars and view Halloween displays similar to Christmas-light displays.
- Carve pumpkins with your household and display the pumpkins outdoors.
- Decorate your home for Halloween.
- Have a "Trick-or-Treat Candy Hunt" with members of your own household.
- Have an online costume party, costume contest or pumpkin carving via video chat.
 - Post your best Family Costume on social media using #HalloweenDC and compete with your friends for the most likes.

Lower risk: (e.g., uncrowded outdoor events and gatherings, where social distancing can be maintained)

- Door-to-door trick-or-treating with social distancing
 - Consider participating in one-way trick or treating where individually packaged treat bags are lined up at edge of a yard or for children to grab- and- go one at a time.
 - Use creative ways to distribute treats, such as using a candy "slide" made of PVC pipe. (See bit.ly/3d5pyai).
- Hold a small group outdoor costume parade and/or contest with social distancing.
- Create an open-air, one-way walk-through outdoor Haunted Forest with social distancing. Greater social distancing is necessary if screaming is anticipated.
- Visit pumpkin patches or orchards with social distancing.
- Hold an outdoor small group Halloween movie night with social distancing.
- Participate in or create other events that are held outdoors and allow attendees to stay in their cars or socially distanced.
- Family events where all parents/adults present are vaccinated.
- Events where everyone present is vaccinated. (safer)

Higher risk activities: (e.g., mixing of multiple households, indoor settings)

- Indoor Haunted Houses
- Indoor trick-or-treating events
- Crowded indoor Halloween parties.
- Going on hayrides with people not from your household
- Bobbing for apples
- Indoor events where COVID-19 precautions (e.g., masking, social distancing) are not being taken.

DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS

Lowest risk activities: (e.g., virtual events and activities involving only your household members)

- Prepare favorite recipes of the deceased at home with members of your household.
- Play music at home.

- Create an altar for the deceased at your home.
- Make and decorate masks.
- Hold online virtual celebrations with friends and family.

Lower risk: (e.g., uncrowded outdoor events and gatherings, where social distancing can be maintained)

- Visit and decorate graves with household members only while social distancing from other groups in the cemetery.
- Have a small, outdoor group get-together or dinner party with social distancing.
- Family events where all parents/adults present are vaccinated.
- Events where everyone present is vaccinated. (safer)

Higher risk activities:(e.g., mixing of multiple households, indoor settings)

- Participating in large indoor celebrations with singing and dancing
- Going to crowded celebrations in a cemetery
- Indoor events where COVID-19 precautions (e.g., masking, social distancing) are not being taken.

The guidelines above will continue to be updated as the outbreak evolves. Please visit coronavirus.dc.gov for the most updated information.