

Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19)
Guidance for Thanksgiving and Other Holiday Celebrations

The end of the year brings many holidays that are important to the DC community. This document provides guidance for DC residents on ways to enjoy the holidays while helping prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) in our community.

Epidemiologic data suggests that private gatherings are a strong contributor to transmission of the COVID-19 virus. Mayor’s Order 2020-119 limits the number of people that can attend an indoor social gathering to 10 people¹. The 10-person limitation applies to private homes, dormitories, hotels, apartments, condominiums and cooperatives, and party or common rooms of such permanent or temporary residences. Outdoor gatherings must not exceed 25 people.

Individuals who meet the following criteria **must not participate in any in-person holiday festivities** due to the risk of exposing others:

- Anyone who has tested positive for the virus that causes COVID-19 and is within their isolation period, whether or not they have symptoms
- Anyone recently exposed to someone diagnosed with COVID-19 and is in their 14-day quarantine period, even if they have tested negative during that time.
- Anyone experiencing symptoms of COVID-19
 - 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, diarrhea, or otherwise feeling unwell.
- For more information, see *Guidance for Persons who Tested Positive for COVID-19* and *Guidance for Contacts of a Person Confirmed to have COVID-19* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance

Celebration Preparation

- **The holidays are traditionally times when people travel long distances to celebrate with family. DC Health strongly recommends avoiding traveling this year, as this may increase the spread of COVID-19.**
- Be socially responsible and choose wisely when planning your activities. Even if you are not at high risk for serious illness with COVID-19, **you could spread the virus to more vulnerable members of your family or community.**
- **Consider hosting or participating in a virtual celebration; or dropping holiday dishes or gifts off on family and friends’ doorsteps.** Traveling to or from a place with higher levels of community cases of COVID-19 can increase the risk of spread to friends and family.
 - Consider the number and rate of COVID-19 cases in DC and in the community where you plan to travel before hosting or attending a holiday celebration.
 - Information on the number of cases in an area can be found on the area’s health department website.
- Keep in mind: COVID-19 spreads even in small gatherings and between family members who live in different households.
- **Outdoor events are safer than indoor**, but there is still a risk of getting and spreading COVID-19 at outdoor events, and the same prevention measures must be followed. Outdoor activities may be conducted under a roof or awning, with no more than two walls in the enclosure. A fully enclosed tent or igloo structure is not outdoors for purposes of safety or the

¹ Unless the number of persons in a household exceeds 10 people

rules on permissible gathering size. The risk of COVID-19 spreading is increased in crowded or poorly ventilated settings.

- If you choose to host in-person holiday gatherings, keep the group as small as possible, and remember to **practice social distancing and ensure everyone in attendance wears a cloth face covering or surgical mask except when they are actively eating or drinking**.
- Keep in mind that holiday travel is **not** considered essential travel. Please remember the following:
 - Avoid traveling out of the National Capitol Region to attend holiday events.
 - Avoid participating in events that include people from outside of the National Capitol Region.
 - If hosting guests from outside of the National Capitol Region, guests traveling from high risk states and countries must quarantine for 14 days after arrival in the DC area or secure a negative test taken three to five days after arrival. For more information, see DC Health Travel Guidance at coronavirus.dc.gov/phasetwo

Everyday Prevention Measures

- **Do not host or attend a holiday gathering** if you or anyone in your household are feeling sick or were recently exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- **Practice social distancing.** Keep at least 6 feet of distance between you and other people who are not in your household, including close friends and family.
- **Wear a cloth face covering or surgical mask** at all times when you leave your home or are around people who are not in your household, including close friends and family. Masks protect the wearer and protect other people.
 - Masks are not required for children two (2) and under.
 - For more information about mask wearing, see *Masks and Cloth Face Coverings for the General Public* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance
- Perform frequent hand hygiene (with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer).
 - You must use soap and water regularly.
 - Key times to perform hand hygiene include:
 - Upon arriving to an event or gathering,
 - Before and after preparing or serving food,
 - Before eating food,
 - After using the toilet,
 - Before, and after putting on, touching, or removing cloth face coverings,
 - After handling another person's belongings,
 - After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing,
- Avoid shaking hands and physical contact with people who don't live with you, including close friends and family. Instead wave and verbally greet people.
- For more information about private gatherings and going out in public see DC Health *Guidance on Private Gatherings* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance and *Deciding to Go Out* at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/deciding-to-go-out.html

Host Considerations

- When deciding how many people (within the 10-person indoor or 25-person outdoor limit) to have at your gathering, consider the amount of space you have and the ability to maintain social distancing during the event.
- Remind guests to wear a mask and to stay home if they feel sick or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- Improve ventilation by opening doors and windows as much as possible.

- Serve food safely:
 - There is no evidence that COVID-19 is spread by food. However, people sharing utensils and congregating around food serving areas pose a risk.
 - Wash your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer before performing any food preparation or serving activities and wear a facemask.
 - Limit the number of people handling or serving food. Identify one person to serve food so that multiple people are not handling the serving utensils.
 - Avoid sharing food and utensils.
 - Limit people going in and out of the areas where food is being prepared or handled.
 - Use touchless garbage cans or pails.
 - Use gloves when handling and disposing of trash. Wash hands before wearing and after removing gloves.
- Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces frequently and any shared items between use.
- For more information about disinfectants that are effective against the virus that causes COVID-19, see the CDC website [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html).
- For more information about gatherings see *Guidance for Private Gatherings* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.

Thanksgiving

Here are some examples of how to celebrate Thanksgiving safely. DC Health strongly recommends participating in the lower risk activities, especially since COVID-19 cases are increasing in DC and from where family and friends may be traveling.

Lower risk activities:

- Having a small Thanksgiving dinner with only your household members.
- Hosting a virtual dinner with your extended friends and family using video technology.
- Watching sporting events, parades and holiday programs at home with your household members.
- Black Friday or Cyber Monday shopping online (preferably with local retailers).

Medium risk activities:

- Having a small group outdoor dinner with family and friends who live in in the National Capitol Region while using everyday prevention measures including wearing face coverings and social distancing.
- Taking your family to a local pumpkin patch or picking apples at a local apple orchard with social distancing.

High risk activities (AVOID):

- Traveling outside the National Capitol Region to states with higher COVID-19 rates than DC to visit friends and family.
- In-person shopping with crowds.
- Large indoor gatherings with people from outside your household, including close friends and family.
- Attending sporting events or parades.

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