

Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) Guidance for Holiday Celebrations

There are 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). Epidemiologic data suggests that private gatherings are a strong contributor to transmission of the COVID-19 virus. Mayor's Order 2021-038 limits the number of people that can attend an indoor social gathering to 10 people. 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 50 people.

Holiday Basics

- 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 who is under quarantine after having close contact with someone with COVID-19.
 - 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 information on what to do if you test positive or were exposed, 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
- Activities are limited to a maximum of **50 participants** if held outdoors, and **10 participants** if held indoors
 - Outdoor activities are preferred over indoor; however, interacting with more people in any setting raises one's risk of exposure to COVID-19.
 - If activities are held indoors, open windows and doors to bring in fresh and improve ventilation, if possible.
- **Outdoor events are safer than indoor**, but there is still a risk of getting or spreading COVID-19 at outdoor events, and the same prevention measures must be followed.
- Review the guidance for *Fully Vaccinated Persons* at coronavirus.dc.gov/phasetwo.

Safety Measures for Hosts and Participants

- **Stay at home or cancel your event if you feel unwell** or were recently exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- **Practice social distancing.** Stay at least 6 feet away from people who do not live with you.
- **Wear a cloth face covering except when actively eating or drinking.** Masks protect the wearer and protect other people.
 - Masks are not required for children two (2) and under.
 - Masks are most effective if they fit snugly to the face, covers the nose and mouth, and have 2-3 layers of tightly woven fabric.
 - Wear masks indoors and outdoors.
 - Keep an additional mask in case your mask gets soiled or misplaced.
 - For more information about mask wearing, see *Masks and Cloth Face Coverings for the General Public* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.

- Don't shake hands or touch others at during gatherings, give high-fives, or do elbow bumps.
- Perform frequent hand hygiene (with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water not available).
 - Key times to perform hand hygiene include
 - Before eating food;
 - After using the toilet;
 - Before and after putting on, touching, or removing cloth face coverings;
 - Before touching your face;
 - Before and after work shifts and work breaks;
 - Before and after using any equipment;
 - Before and after participating in fitness or workout activities;
 - After handling client belongings; and
 - After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Get your flu shot, it's not too late! Get your COVID-19 shot when it's your turn. Learn more at coronavirus.dc.gov/vaccine.
- 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

Celebration Preparation

- **The holidays are traditionally times when people travel long distances to celebrate with family. DC Health recommends avoiding traveling at this time, as this may increase the spread of COVID-19.**
- Keep in mind: COVID-19 spreads even in small gatherings and between family members who live in different households.
- Have conversations prior to the event date to understand the expectations for celebrating together.
- 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.
- If you choose to host in-person holiday gatherings, keep the group as small as possible, and remember to **practice social distancing and make sure all guests wear a face mask.**
- Outdoor activities of no more than 50 people 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 rules on permissible gathering size.
- The risk of COVID-19 spreading is increased in crowded or poorly ventilated settings.
- 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, make sure you have

reviewed the *DC Health Travel Guidance* at coronavirus.dc.gov/phasetwo.

Host Considerations

- When deciding how many people (within the 10-person indoor or 50-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.
- Have extra clean masks available for your guests and remind everyone to wear them at all times, except while eating and drinking.
- Remind guests to wear a mask and to stay home if they feel sick or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- If as a host you or anyone in your household is feeling sick, you should cancel your event so that you don't put your friends and family at risk.
- If hosting indoors, improve ventilation by opening doors and windows as much as possible.
- You can take these steps to serve food more 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.
 - Provide single-use options like condiment packs, disposable plates, and utensils.
 - 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.

Holiday Examples

Here are some examples of how to celebrate the holiday 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.

Safer Ways to Observe Religious Holidays:

Attending large gatherings to observe religious and spiritual holidays increases your risk of getting and spreading COVID-19. The safest way to observe religious and spiritual holidays this year is to gather virtually, with people who live with you, or outside and at least 6 feet apart from others.

- Enjoy traditional meals with those who live with you.
- Practice religious holiday customs at home.
- Watch virtual religious and cultural performances.
- Attend religious ceremonies virtually.

Lower risk activities:

- Having a small holiday 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.

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.
- Easter egg hunt 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.