

KDHE Guidance for Celebrating Holidays

November 2020

This document outlines guidance and considerations for celebrating holidays such as Thanksgiving and Christmas during the COVID-19 pandemic. As typical celebrations do not allow for minimizing contact with non-household members, it is important to plan early and identify safer alternatives. Refer also to any specific city or county guidance in your community which may be more restrictive than what is outlined below.

Lower risk activities

- Having a small dinner with only people who live in your household
- Preparing traditional family recipes for family and neighbors, especially those at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, and delivering them in a way that does not involve contact with others
- Having a virtual dinner and sharing recipes with friends and family
- Shopping online rather than in person throughout the holiday season, especially on the day after Thanksgiving
- Watching sports events, parades, and movies from home

Moderate risk activities

- Having a small outdoor dinner with family and friends who live in your community
- Visiting pumpkin patches or orchards where people use hand sanitizer before touching pumpkins or apples, wearing masks is enforced, and people are able to maintain social distancing
- Attending a small outdoor sports event with safety precautions in place

Higher risk activities to avoid

- Going shopping in crowded stores throughout the holiday season
- Participating or being a spectator at a crowded race or sports event
- Attending crowded parties or gatherings
- Attending large indoor gatherings with people from outside of your household
- Using alcohol or drugs that may alter judgement and make it more difficult to practice COVID-19 safety measures

Considerations for Small Gatherings of Family and Friends

- Celebrating virtually or with members of your own household poses the lowest risk for spread. Your household is anyone who currently lives and shares common spaces in your housing unit (such as your house or apartment).

- In-person gatherings that bring together family members or friends from different households, including college students returning home, poses varying levels of risk.
- Several factors contribute to the risk of getting and spreading COVID-19 at small in-person gatherings. In combination, these factors will create various amounts of risk:
 - Community levels of COVID-19 – High or increasing levels of COVID-19 cases in the gathering location, as well as in the areas where attendees are coming from, increase the risk of infection and spread among attendees.
 - Exposure during travel – Airports, bus stations, train stations, public transport, gas stations, and rest stops are all public places travelers can be exposed to the virus in the air and on surfaces.
 - Location of the gathering – Indoor gatherings, especially those with poor ventilation, pose more risk than outdoor gatherings.
 - Duration of gathering – Gatherings that last longer pose more risk than shorter gatherings. Being within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for a cumulative total of 10 minutes greatly increases the risk of becoming sick and requires a 14-day quarantine.
 - Number of people at the gathering – Gatherings with more people pose more risk than those with fewer people.
 - Behavior of attendees *prior to the gathering* – Individuals who do not consistently adhere to social distancing, mask wearing, handwashing, and other prevention behaviors pose more risk than those who consistently practiced these safety measures.
 - Behaviors of attendees *during the gathering* – Gatherings with more safety measures in place, such as mask wearing, social distancing, and handwashing pose less risk than those where fewer or not preventive measures are implemented.

The following people should not attend in-person holiday gatherings:

People with or exposed to COVID-19 – Do not host or participate in any in-person gatherings if you or anyone in your household:

- Has been diagnosed with COVID-19 and has not [met the criteria for when it is safe to be around others](#)
- Has [symptoms of COVID-19](#)
- Is waiting for COVID-19 test results
- May have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days
- Is at an [increased risk](#) of severe illness from COVID-19 such as older adults, people with certain medical conditions, or those who live or work with someone at increased risk of severe illness.

Personal Protection Measures and Considerations for Hosting or Attending a Gathering

Regardless of how you celebrate, there are important recommendations for how to keep yourself and your household members safe.

- Check the COVID-19 infection rates in areas where attendees live on state, local, territorial, or tribal health department websites. Consider whether it is safe to host or attend the gathering based on the available data.
- [Correctly wear](#) a cloth face covering to prevent disease spread when outside your home and around others who are not part of your household. If you are hosting, require guests to wear cloth face coverings while not eating or drinking.
- Avoid confined spaces, including indoor spaces that don't allow for easy distancing of at least 6-feet between you and others. If setting up outdoor seating, physical distancing should still be maintained.
- Practice physical distancing – place at least 6-feet between yourself and other people who are not part of your household. Limit the number of attendees as much as possible to allow people from different households to remain at least 6 feet apart. Consider only hosting or attending parties hosted in large, outdoor spaces that allow for physical distancing of at least 6-feet between attendees.
 - When setting up tables and chairs, create individual seating areas of various sizes spaced 6-feet apart to be utilized by individual family or household units. Encourage guests to sit only with those who are members of their household, especially for eating and drinking when cloth face coverings will be removed.
- Practice routine [hand hygiene](#) – wash your hands often, for at least 20 seconds with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Encourage guests to practice routine hand hygiene, and provide soap and water or hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- [Clean](#) frequently touched items regularly.
- Increase ventilation by opening windows and doors to the extent that is safe and feasible based on weather, or by placing central air and heating on continuous circulation.
- Plan ahead and ask guests to avoid contact with people outside of their households for 14 days before and after the gathering.

Food and Drinks

- Encourage guests to bring food and drinks for themselves and for members of their own household only; avoid potluck-style gatherings.
- Wear a mask while preparing food or serving food to others who do not live in your household.
- Limit people going in and out of areas where food is being prepared or handled.
- Have one person who is wearing a mask serve all the food to avoid sharing serving utensils.
- Offer no-touch trash cans for guests. Wear gloves when disposing of shared trash.
- Wash dishes in the dishwasher or with hot soapy water.

Travel and Overnight Stays

Travel increases the chance of getting and spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. Staying home is the best way to protect yourself and others.

- Check local travel restrictions before you go.
- Get your flu shot.
- Always wear a mask in public settings, like on public and mass transportation.
- If you are staying overnight in the home of friends or family, wear masks when inside the house.
- Avoid close contact by staying at least 6 feet apart from anyone who is not from your household.
- Practice routine [hand hygiene](#) – wash your hands often, for at least 20 seconds with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid contact with anyone who is sick.
- Avoid touching your mask, eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Treat pets as you would other human family members – do not let pets interact with people who do not live in your household.

References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Holiday Celebrations and Small Gatherings. Retrieved November 2020 from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html>.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Celebrating Thanksgiving. Retrieved November 2020 from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays/thanksgiving.html/>.