

HOLIDAY SAFETY GUIDANCE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

SOLANO PUBLIC HEALTH | NOVEMBER 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has been stressful and isolating for many people. Gatherings during the upcoming holidays can be an opportunity to reconnect with family and friends. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 epidemic is worsening, and small household gatherings are an important contributor to the rise in COVID-19 cases. As residents plan for winter holiday celebrations, Solano County offers the following considerations on how residents can more safely interact and protect the health of their families, friends, and communities while reducing the risk and spread of COVID-19.

Any activity involving people outside of your household increases chances of exposure to the virus. When you do plan to gather with others outside of your household, the safest gathering is one that is a small, stable group that meets outdoors for a short duration and uses face coverings, 6-foot social distance and other safety measures.

CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE HOSTING OR ATTENDING

Hosts should let guests know that safety guidelines must be followed before the event so everyone is aware. Consider the following questions:

- Are there many or increasing cases of COVID-19 in areas where attendees live?
- Have all attendees been taking precautions against COVID-19?
- Will all attendees wear face coverings and keep physical distance at the gathering?

Do not attend a gathering if:

- Anyone in your household has COVID-19-like symptoms
- You are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 due to age or medical conditions; consider attending virtually instead

Do not host or attend gatherings with anyone who has COVID-19 or has been exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days.

GATHERING SAFELY

If you gather in person, keep the gathering safe, small, short, and stable.

1) **KEEP IT SAFE:** *Gather outdoors if possible*

The risk of COVID-19 transmission is highest in indoor spaces without enough ventilation. Outdoor spaces are better. • If you go inside, open windows and doors to increase ventilation.

2) **KEEP IT SMALL:** *Limit attendance to allow for social distancing*

When people from different households are together a crowded space where maintaining 6-foot distance can be difficult, the risk of spreading COVID-19 goes up. That's why it is important to limit the number of attendees so that proper social distancing can be maintained in a given space. Try to avoid direct contact, including handshakes and hugs, with others outside of the household.

3) **KEEP IT SHORT:** *Gather for a short duration*

The longer people gather together, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spreading.

4) **KEEP IT STABLE:** *Do not participate in multiple gatherings with many different households*

The more people interact with others outside their household, the higher the risk of spreading COVID-19. That's why participating in multiple gatherings with different households is discouraged. If you attend several gatherings over the holidays, try to keep it to the same group of people.

ADDITIONAL SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Maintain at least 6 feet of physical distance* from people not in your household as much as possible.
- *Wear a face covering at all times, including when talking to others.* You can remove your face covering to eat, drink, or take medication as long as you stay at least 6 feet away from everyone outside your own household.
- *Wash hands with soap and water often.* If not available, use hand sanitizer.
- *Serve shared food safely.* If it is not possible to use single-serve disposable containers, food and beverages must be served by a person who washes or sanitizes their hands frequently and wears a face covering. If you are dropping off home-prepared food or drink gifts, be sure to wear a mask and disinfect or wash your hands thoroughly. Use serving utensils to hand out food whenever possible.
- *Avoid singing, chanting, and shouting.* If you cannot avoid these activities, keep your face covering on, your volume low, and at least a 6-foot distance from others.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU WERE EXPOSED OR DEVELOP SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19

In general, you are considered a close contact if you were within 6 feet of a person who has COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period, with one or both individuals not wearing a mask.

Monitor yourself for symptoms for 14 days after attending a gathering and get tested immediately if you have any symptoms. If you were exposed to someone who is sick with COVID-19 or have any one of the following symptoms that is new and not otherwise explained, get tested for COVID-19. If you test positive for COVID-19, immediately notify the host and others who attended about their possible exposure to the virus.

Here are symptoms of COVID-19:

- Fever, chills, or repeated shaking/shivering
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing
- Runny or congested nose
- Diarrhea
- Feeling unusually weak or fatigued
- New loss of taste or smell
- Muscle pain
- Headache

To get tested, contact your healthcare provider. You can also register for free testing at community testing sites even if you do not have symptoms or do not have health insurance. Sign up through <http://www.LHI.care/covidtesting> or call 888-634-1123. You can find additional testing sites at www.bit.ly/solanotestingsites

TRAVEL WITH CAUTION

Traveling may increase the risk of getting and spreading COVID-19. Airports, bus stations, train stations and rest stops are all places travelers can be exposed to the virus.

1) Do not travel if you are sick. You could spread COVID-19 or another infection.

If you have COVID-19 symptoms, get tested and wait for a negative test result before you start your trip. Even if you test negative for COVID-19, you should not travel if you're feeling ill as you may spread another infection.

2) If you must travel, take steps to reduce risk.

- Wear a face covering in public settings
- Keep at least 6 feet of physical distance from others
- Ventilate your space, if possible (for example, open the bus or taxi window)
- Wash or sanitize your hands often

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Avoid contact with anyone who is sick
- Avoid contact with frequently touched surfaces
- Get a flu shot

Air travel

Most viruses do not spread easily on flights because of how air circulates and is filtered on airplanes. However, it is likely that you will be sitting within 6 feet of others for long periods of time, which can increase your risk of getting COVID-19. Air travel also requires spending time in security lines and airport terminals, which can bring you in close contact with other people and frequently touched surfaces. During the holidays, planes and airports may be significantly more crowded than usual, which also increases risk of transmission.

Car travel

Don't share vehicles with people you don't live with. Vehicles are small enclosed spaces where COVID-19 can spread easily between people. If you must share a vehicle, try to ride with the same people each time, make sure everyone wears a face covering and open the windows to maximize outdoor air circulation as much as you can.

If you must travel, plan ahead

Is COVID-19 spreading where you are traveling?

The more cases at your destination, the more likely you are to get infected during travel and spread the virus to others when you return. For cases in the last seven days by state, see the [CDC COVID Data Tracker](#)

Are you, your travel companions, or those you are visiting at higher risk for serious illness?

Older adults and people with underlying medical conditions are more likely to get really sick if they get COVID-19. The virus can be spread among people who are not feeling any symptoms.

Will you be able to social distance from others during your trip?

It is hard to maintain 6 feet of space from others when using public transportation like airplanes, buses, trains, and taxis. Even when traveling in your own vehicle, you may find yourself in close contact with other people and frequently touched surfaces while making stops along the way.

Can you watch for symptoms and get tested?

After traveling, monitor yourself for symptoms for 14 days and get tested immediately if you develop any symptoms.

If you have engaged in any activity where you might have been exposed to COVID-19, including travel, reduce your contact with other people as much as possible for 14 days, keep your distance from others, and ensure that you always wear a face covering anytime you're outside your household.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's guidance for celebrating the holidays:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html>

California Department of Public Health's guidance on gatherings

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/CDPH-Guidance-for-the-Prevention-of-COVID-19-Transmission-for-Gatherings-10-09.aspx>

Solano Public Health's local guidance and resources:

www.solanocounty.com/covid19