



INFECTION PREVENTION & YOU

STAYING COVID AWARE DURING THE HOLIDAYS

It's hard to believe the holidays are just around the corner. During a year that has challenged the way we connect with one another, it comes as no surprise that many of us are contemplating celebrations and gatherings with friends and family who are dearly missed. While holidays will certainly be different this year, with a little creativity and attention to safe practices, we can enjoy this festive time and keep each other safe.

Setting a plan and limiting travel

The first step we can take to promote safety is to discuss plans with one another. This gives everyone the opportunity to talk about concerns and develop plans that everyone can agree to follow, so no one is caught off guard. Discuss what to do if anyone develops signs of being sick, like a fever, cough, or sore throat. Communication is especially important when considering travel plans. The safest gatherings will be small (under 10 people) and will limit the need for public air/ground transportation, where it can be hard to distance from others. There are many different platforms to include loved ones from far away via cell phones, tablets, or virtual meeting spaces. Keep in mind that local governments may set different rules about gatherings, so staying up to date via local news or social media will be crucial.

Safe practices to keep in mind while gathering

By now most people are probably familiar with safe practices that are simple to do, yet very effective in stopping the spread of germs, like the coronavirus that causes COVID-19. Handwashing, either with soap and water, or using hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol, is one of the most important practices to keep friends and family safe. With so many festive smells available, use fun-scented soaps and sanitizers to help promote the joyful spirit! Many disinfectants can also make homes and places smell great, while killing germs to prevent spreading infections. Be sure to clean items like door knobs, light switches, and countertops which are frequently touched more often.

Get more infection prevention and control resources online at www.apic.org/patientsafety

You know the drill—social distancing and mask wearing

Distancing at least 6 feet apart and wearing face masks are recommended to prevent germs from traveling from one person to another. Hosting outdoors not only allows for easier distancing, but also promotes exercise and the holiday weather. Think snow angels, but while standing! In places where it's just too cold to be outside, cracking open a window, even just a little bit, can help circulate fresh air. Wearing a mask over your mouth and nose serves as a barrier that prevents germs from infecting others, and it becomes particularly important when social distancing is hard to do—during gatherings and activities like shopping. Maybe turn that ugly sweater contest into an ugly mask contest!

Food preparation and distribution

Safety measures during food preparation can seem overwhelming. The best plans will limit shared food. If food must be shared, the best idea is to have one designated person serve food. Other ideas include each guest bringing their own food—a great way to share recipes—or ordering individually packaged food ahead of the celebration—a great way to support local businesses! This is also a perfect time to rely on disposable condiments, dishware, and utensils. Any plan that prevents infection AND dirty dishes is a plan to get excited about.

Celebrate friends and family by keeping them safe

2020 will certainly be a year to remember. Now more than ever, we appreciate the value of friendship, family bonds, and connection. With all the enthusiasm for the holiday season, it may be tempting to return to old ways of celebrating. By remaining vigilant and tapping into the creative spirit, we can enjoy this festive time and still do our part to protect our loved ones and communities.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

“COVID-19: Holiday Celebrations and Small Gatherings”. CDC. Retrieved 18 November 2020.

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html

“Celebrating Thanksgiving”. CDC. Retrieved 18 November 2020. www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays/thanksgiving.html

“COVID-19 (coronavirus) and holiday celebrations: Tips for gathering safely”. Mayo Clinic. Retrieved 18 November 2020. www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/covid-19-holiday-safety-tips/art-20503363



ABOUT APIC

The Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC) is creating a safer world through the prevention of infection. APIC's nearly 16,000 members develop and direct infection prevention and control programs that save lives and improve the bottom line for healthcare facilities. APIC advances its mission through patient safety, education, implementation science, competencies and certification, advocacy, and data standardization. Visit us at [apic.org](https://www.apic.org).

1400 Crystal Drive, Suite 900
Arlington, VA 22202
www.apic.org/patientsafety