



# **Celebrating the Holidays During COVID-19**

## **Tips for Holiday Gatherings**

Holiday gatherings for Michiganders will be different this year due to COVID-19. Your family doesn't have to miss out on being together during the holidays, either virtual or in-person. Here are some tips so you can get the most out of your holiday gatherings and reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19.

# Factors That Affect the Risk of Your Holiday Gathering

There are several factors that contribute to the risk of getting infected or infecting others with the virus that causes COVID-19 at a holiday celebration. In combination, these factors will create various amounts of risk, so it is important to consider them individually and together:

- **Community levels of COVID-19:** Review the [MI Safe Start map](#) before you have gatherings to know the level of viral spread in your community and the communities where your guests may be travelling from. If there is community spread, refrain from hosting or attending a holiday gathering. Consider a virtual gathering using online meeting software instead.
- **The location of the gathering:** Indoor gatherings generally pose more risk than outdoor gatherings. Indoor gatherings with poor ventilation pose more risk than those with good ventilation, such as those with open windows or doors.
- **The duration of the gathering:** Gatherings that last longer pose more risk than shorter gatherings.
- **The number of people at the gathering:** Gatherings with more people pose more risk than gatherings with fewer people. An [October 9, 2020](#) MDHHS Emergency Epidemic Order states that indoor gatherings should be 10 people or less to limit or reduce the number of contacts and risk for spreading the virus.
- **The behaviors of attendees prior to the gathering:** Gatherings with attendees who are not adhering to social distancing (staying at least 6 feet apart), mask wearing, hand washing, and other prevention behaviors pose more risk than gatherings with attendees who are engaging in these preventive behaviors.
- **The behaviors of attendees during the gathering:** Gatherings with preventive measures, such as mask wearing, social distancing, and hand washing, in place pose less risk than gatherings where fewer or no preventive measures are being implemented.

# General Considerations for Fall and Winter Holidays

## Before you celebrate: Hosting a holiday gathering

- If you will be hosting a celebration, follow these tips for hosting gatherings:
  - Host outdoor activities rather than indoor activities as much as possible. If hosting an outdoor event is not possible, and you choose to host an indoor event, avoid crowded, poorly ventilated, or fully enclosed indoor spaces.
  - Increase ventilation by opening windows and doors to the extent that is safe and feasible based on the weather.
  - Host activities with only people from your local area as much as possible.
  - Limit numbers of attendees.
  - Provide updated information to your guests about any COVID-19 safety guidelines and steps in place to prevent the spread of the virus.
  - Provide or encourage attendees to bring supplies to help you and others stay healthy. For example, extra masks (do not share or swap with others), hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, and tissues.
  - If you are planning in-person holiday gatherings with people outside of your household, consider asking all guests to limit contact with others as much as possible 14 days before the gathering.

# General Considerations for Fall and Winter Holidays

## During the celebration

Follow these tips to reduce your risk of being exposed to, getting, or spreading COVID-19 during the celebration:

- Social distance and limit close contact
  - Maintain a distance of at least 6 feet or more from people you don't live with. Be particularly mindful in areas where it may be harder to keep this distance, such as restrooms and eating areas.
  - Avoid using restroom facilities at high traffic times, such as at the end of a public event.
  - Avoid busy eating areas, such as restaurants during high volume mealtimes, if you plan to eat out at a restaurant.
  - Minimize gestures that promote close contact. For example, do not shake hands, elbow bump, or give hugs. Instead wave and verbally greet others.
- Wear masks
  - Wear a mask at all times when around people who don't live in your household to reduce the risk of spreading the virus.
  - Avoid singing, chanting, or shouting, especially when not wearing a mask and within 6 feet of others.
- Wash hands
  - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.

- Keep safe around food and drinks
  - Currently, there is no evidence to suggest that handling food or eating is associated with directly spreading COVID-19. It is possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object, including food, food packaging, or utensils that have the virus on it, and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes. However, this is not thought to be the main way that the virus is spread. Remember, it is always important to follow good hygiene to reduce the risk of illness from common foodborne germs.
  - Make sure everyone washes their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before and after preparing, serving, and eating food. Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
  - Instead of potluck-style gatherings, encourage guests to bring food and drinks for themselves and for members of their own household only.
  - Limit people going in and out of the areas where food is being prepared or handled, such as in the kitchen or around the grill, if possible.
  - Wear a mask while preparing or serving food to others who don't live in your household.
  - If serving any food, consider having one person serve all the food so that multiple people are not handling the serving utensils.
  - Use single-use options or identify one person to serve shareable items, like salad dressings, food containers, plates and utensils, and condiments.
  - If you choose to use any items that are reusable (e.g., seating covers, tablecloths, linen napkins), wash and disinfect them after the event.

# General Considerations for Fall and Winter Holidays

## After the celebration

If you participated in higher risk activities or think that you may have been exposed during your celebration, take extra precautions (in addition the ones listed above) for 14 days after the event to protect others:

- Stay home as much as possible.
- Avoid being around people at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.
- Consider getting tested for COVID-19.
- If you develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19, such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath, or if you test positive for COVID-19, immediately contact the host and others who attended the event or celebration that you attended. They may need to inform other attendees about their possible exposure to the virus. Contact your health care provider and follow the CDC-recommended steps for what to do if you become sick, and follow the public health recommendations for community-related exposure.
- If you are waiting for COVID-19 test results, stay home until you have a result, and follow CDC's guidance to help stop the spread of COVID-19.
- If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19, a public health worker may contact you to check on your health and ask who you have been in contact with and where you've spent time in order to identify and provide support to people (contacts) who may have been infected. Your information will be confidential.
- If you are notified that you were a close contact of someone who tested positive for COVID-19:
  - Stay home for 14 days from the last time you had contact with that person.
  - Monitor for symptoms of coronavirus.
  - Get information about COVID-19 testing if you feel sick.

# People Who Should Not Attend In-Person Holiday Celebrations

- People with or exposed to COVID-19
  - Do not host or participate in any in-person festivities, 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 viral test results.
    - May have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days.
- People at increased risk for severe illness
  - If you are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19, or live or work with someone at increased risk of severe illness, you should avoid in-person gatherings with people who do not live in your household.
  - Avoid larger gatherings and consider attending activities that pose lower risk (as described throughout this page) if you decide to attend an in-person gathering with people who do not live in your household.



## **For more information:**

State of Michigan Coronavirus Website:

[Michigan.gov/coronavirus](https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus)

CDC COVID-19 Holiday Guidance:

[CDC.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html)