



Celebrating Thanksgiving Safely

COVID-19 has affected so much of our lives this year, including how we celebrate with our loved ones. We ask you to consider with care how you celebrate during this holiday season, knowing that our choices affect one another's lives.

We offer the following guidelines to help you think through how you can observe the holidays while lowering your risk of spreading COVID-19.

Lowest Risk - Celebrate in person only with those who are in your immediate household. Although it's disappointing not to gather with loved ones, we encourage you not to meet in person with extended family for the Thanksgiving meal. Instead, consider some of these options:

- Even without the family gathering, allow the day to be festive. Make some of your favorite foods. Use formal dining or decorations to make the day special. Do things that set the day apart.
- Prepare traditional family recipes for family and neighbors, especially those at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, delivering them in a way that doesn't involve contact with others.
- Gather online or by phone to share stories or games. Storycorps (<https://storycorps.org/participate/>) and TimeSlips (<https://timeslips.org/>) offer great resources to connect and share personal, meaningful stories.
- Have the conversations you would normally have around the table by phone or teleconference. Call the people with whom you would normally gather to talk about your lives and share moments of gratitude.

If you do share a meal with others outside your household, follow these guidelines for safer meal options:

- Keep the gathering small. With fewer people, the risk goes down. If you usually have larger gatherings, consider having two (or more) smaller gatherings in separate locations or in shifts.
- Remind people to stay home if they have been exposed to COVID-19 in the last 14 days or are showing COVID-19 symptoms, such as a cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, or loss of taste or smell. ***Always remember that you can leave (or politely ask someone to leave) if you have concerns or don't feel safe.***

- Refrain from physical touch, such as hugs or handshakes.
- Provide hand sanitizer at entrances and single use towels by sinks. Remind everyone to wash their hands before eating food.
- If at all possible, spend your time and have your meal outdoors. You may wish to eat at midday when it will be warmer. If it's not possible to eat outdoors, provide additional ventilation by opening windows.
- Wear masks or face coverings when you are indoors or not eating. Provide masks for everyone, if they do not have their own.
- Arrange tables or chairs to allow for social distancing.

Please avoid:

- Large gatherings of people – whether indoor or outdoor. When groups of people gather, especially close to together, or at dinner tables where people are unmasked and having group conversations, the chance of being in contact with someone who has been exposed to COVID-19 rises significantly.
- Sharing plates of food. Do not leave out common dishes, such as appetizers, dips, or any dish where people use their hands to get food. Provide individual portions whenever possible. If serving any food, consider identifying one person (preferably masked) to serve all food so that multiple people are not handling the serving utensils.

After Thanksgiving:

- If you have been with people outside of your immediate household, please self-isolate as much as possible and watch for symptoms.
- If you have had others in your home, clean and disinfect all surfaces.

At any time:

- Please continue to follow the standard safety guidelines:
 - Do not go out unless it is for essential business.
 - Whenever you leave your home, wear a mask or cloth face covering that covers your nose and mouth.
 - Keep at a distance of at least six feet from other people.
 - Wash or sanitize your hands regularly. Wash for at least 20 seconds with soap and water whenever you return to your home.
 - Monitor yourself for symptoms. If you develop new and unexplained symptoms, such as cough or shortness of breath, fever, loss of taste or smell, or other symptoms of COVID-19, self-isolate, contact your health care provider, and get tested.

More guidelines are available from the CDC at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html#thanksgiving>

We know these guidelines may be discouraging. But we offer them, knowing that prevention now is far better than dealing with an outbreak in December that might affect many people. Thank you for taking this seriously, and for making the necessary changes to keep yourself and one another safe.