

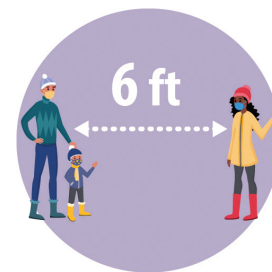
PATIENT EDUCATION | **INFORMATION SERIES**

Socializing during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Holidays, birthdays, and special events are times when we look forward to gathering with family and friends. As the coronavirus (the virus that causes COVID-19) continues to spread throughout the US and the globe, we need to make special effort when thinking about gathering in order to stay safe. In general, the more people you are with, the more closely you interact with them, and the longer the visit, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. Here are some general tips to stay healthy and help you make decisions about celebrating and visiting with family and friends during this challenging time.

**Everyday Tips To Stay Healthy:**

1. **Wear a mask** whenever you are outside of your home and may be in contact with others. Masks protect you and those around you. Masks are a sign of respect and care. Double masks like a cloth mask over a disposable medical mask offer even more protection.
2. **Wash your hands often** with soap and water, or an alcohol-based sanitizer.
3. **Maintain social distancing** (at least 6 feet).
4. **Avoid crowds, both large and small.**
5. **Avoid indoor settings** where people gather, including restaurants, gyms and coffee shops.
6. **Get your flu shot.** If you are eligible, get the COVID-19 vaccine. You will still need to take precautions but the vaccine is safe and helps prevent serious illness. Talk to your healthcare provider and learn more from the CDC website.
7. **Partner with your healthcare provider** to manage any health conditions.
8. **Practice self-care** by getting enough sleep, eating a healthful diet, exercising as appropriate, and managing stress.
9. **Check-in on family and friends** who live alone or may be struggling with the social isolation via video phone or group chat.
10. **Be realistic.** COVID-19 is a very serious, sometimes deadly, virus. You have to do what you can to reduce risk for yourself, your family and your extended contacts. Anyone can get this virus and people without symptoms can spread it to others at higher risk.



Holiday/special occasion strategies to stay healthy


Plan ahead, and make your expectations clear to all who will attend.

1. **Have a small celebration** with members of your household or a small group who agree to follow safe practices.
2. If you are getting together with people who do not live in your household, **it is best to gather outdoors**.
3. **Be sure to wear masks and maintain social distancing**. If people have to briefly remove their masks while drinking/eating, keep a safe distance to avoid spreading the virus and wash hands often.
4. **Set expectations related to outdoor gatherings**, including what to do if weather is bad. If you do have to stay indoors, make sure the room or space is well-ventilated (for example, open windows or doors) and large enough to allow for social distancing.
5. **Limit** nonessential travel.
6. **Wash hands often**. Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces and any shared items between use.
7. **Delay or cancel a visit** if you or your visitors have symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days.
8. **Deliver special foods** to local friends and neighbors in a contact-free way. Let them know that there is no evidence that COVID-19 is transmitted through food. Reassure them that you prepared this food in keeping with safety guidelines. For more information on food safety and COVID-19, see the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/newsletter/food-safety-and-Coronavirus.html>









9. Encourage your out of town guests to:

- a. Visit "virtually" this year rather than in person.
 - b. Stay at a hotel and visit with you outdoors only, with a mask and social distancing.
 - c. Get a COVID-19 test and quarantine for 14 days, then visit with you outdoors or indoors. During the quarantine period, they will need to stay in a guest room, away from others, and wear a mask if in common areas. No close contact. This includes college kids and seniors!
 - d. Even if some or all of you have been vaccinated, you still need to follow safe practices, including masking, social distancing, and quarantining, as vaccines are not 100% effective in preventing infection.
10. **Consider keeping a list of people you visited or who visited you** and when the visit occurred. This will help with contact tracing if someone becomes sick.
 11. **Be creative** about how to be safe and social during this unique time.



Coping with COVID-19

Take breaks from the news 	Take care of your body 	Set goals and priorities 
Make time to unwind 	Connect with others 	Focus on the facts 

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Additional Resources

American Thoracic Society (ATS)

- www.thoracic.org/patients
 - Face coverings in a pandemic
 - How to stay safe during COVID-19

Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC)

- www.cdc.gov

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