



A Guide to Safer Gatherings during COVID-19



The Holidays are all about good times with family and friends. If you're planning to gather with friends and family during the upcoming holidays, think about what you can do to help keep yourself and your loved ones safe from COVID-19.

If You Gather: A Safety Overview

Being vaccinated is the safest way to protect yourself and those around you, especially those who are not eligible to get vaccinated, such as young children. If you or someone in your family is not yet fully vaccinated against COVID-19, you should consider the risk of gathering. Limiting your in-person gatherings will help protect you and your unvaccinated loved ones from becoming seriously ill.

The vaccines are highly effective in helping prevent serious illness and death, but if you decide to gather, whether vaccinated or not, there's a risk of spreading COVID-19 infection. Vaccination, masks, handwashing, and staying home if you're sick are all steps you can take to help protect others.

The following tips below may help reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19.

Public Gatherings

- **Mask up.** Vaccinated or not, people five years and older, are required to wear a face covering in all indoor public places, and at outdoor events with 500 or more people, such as concerts or sporting events. We strongly recommend that children between 2 and 4 years old also wear masks
- **Stay home** if you're sick or have any symptoms
- **Plan ahead.** Drive yourself or have alternate way to get home in case you find yourself in an unsafe or uncomfortable place, such as a crowded bar with people who are not wearing masks.

Private Gatherings - Before you host or attend a social gathering

- **Review the guest list.** Think about who will be attending. Are there people who may be in a [high risk category](#), including young children who are not yet eligible for vaccination? Do you know whether the guests are vaccinated or not? It is strongly recommended that you avoid contact with those who are unvaccinated; the safest option is to gather virtually. If you decide to gather in person, be really clear with friends and family about how you will make safety a priority when spending time together.
- **Travel safely.** If you're planning to travel to gather with family or friends, please follow [CDC travel guidance](#). You'll want to be extra vigilant with wearing a mask and staying 6 feet (2 meters) apart from others in public.
- **Take it outside.** Outdoor gatherings are much safer than indoor ones. If you must be indoors, choose a location that is well ventilated, such as a room with open windows.

- **Keep it small.** The smaller the better when gathering with people outside of your household.
- **Keep it short.** Shorter periods of time give COVID-19 less chance to spread. Shorter gatherings also make it easier to keep hands and surfaces properly sanitized.
- **Consider the children.** Kids may have trouble staying six feet apart, so wearing masks and washing hands are important. Remember: kids under 2 should never wear masks! If your family member is younger than 2 years old or cannot wear a mask, limit or avoid visits.
- **Do a health check.** Ask if anyone has had [symptoms](#) such as cough, fever or shortness of breath, in the last 2 weeks. Ask guests to check their temperature before arriving. Anyone with a fever—or who has had other symptoms or knows they have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last two weeks—should stay home.
- **Get tested.** Whether vaccinated or not, you can decrease the risk of infection by getting tested 72 hours before the gathering. At home tests can be completed the day of the event. Even with a negative test, it's important to still follow the other safety precautions shared on this page.
- **Add WA Notify to your smartphone.** This will alert you if you may have been exposed to COVID-19 and anonymously alert others if you test positive. [WA Notify](#) is completely private and doesn't know who you are or track where you go.

During a private gathering

- **Wear masks.** If you're gathering indoors with people outside of your household, it's recommended that everyone wear face coverings.
- **Wash hands.** If there is no access to a sink, provide hand sanitizer.
- **Watch distance and limit close contact.** Where possible stay 6 feet apart, especially among people at high risk for severe COVID-19 or who are not yet fully vaccinated.
- **Open windows.** Keep windows open in rooms where people will gather to allow for proper ventilation.
- **Clean.** Disinfect frequently used surfaces before, during and after the gathering.

After a private gathering

- **Wash hands (again).** Wash for 20 seconds with soap and water.
- **Sanitize.** [Clean all surfaces](#) that may have been touched by guests such as tabletops, counters, doorknobs and bathroom fixtures, with soap and water first, and then a disinfecting agent.
- **Watch for symptoms - particularly during the first 5 days after the event.** If you develop any symptoms, get tested. Alert others at the gathering if there's a positive test among anyone in attendance.

For more information visit website <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/COVID19>