

A Safer Way to Holiday 2020

The holidays are fast approaching; a time to typically celebrate, connect and travel with family and friends. Traditions will look very differently this year due to the [COVID-19 pandemic](#). This holiday season, consider how your holiday plans can be modified to reduce the spread of COVID-19 to keep your friends, families, and communities healthy and safe.

As the COVID-19 virus continues to circulate in communities within Marin County, severe illness, hospitalizations and deaths among our residents is imminent. Individuals can spread COVID-19 even without symptoms. This ongoing risk requires everyone to follow necessary precautions. Reducing close contact with individuals outside your household by maintaining **distance** of six feet from others, wearing **cloth face coverings**, practicing **hand hygiene**, and staying home when not feeling well remain important measures to slow the spread.

There are plenty of alternative methods of celebration where we can continue to observe our cultural traditions, have fun, and experience connection while avoiding exposure to spreading the virus. Strong recommendations and safer ideas compiled from [Marin County Health and Human Services \(HHS\)](#), the [Marin Prevention Network \(MPN\)](#) and the [Marin County Office of Education \(MCOE\)](#) follow below:

AVOID TRAVEL ALTOGETHER

IF YOU MUST TRAVEL

DO NOT TRAVEL IF YOU ARE SICK

HOLIDAY GATHERINGS IN GENERAL

SAFER ALTERNATIVES FOR THANKSGIVING AND FRIENDSGIVING

SAFER ALTERNATIVES FOR DECEMBER HOLIDAYS

UNDERAGE DRINKING & DRUG PREVENTION

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AVOID TRAVEL ALTOGETHER

Dr. Matt Willis states, "Marin residents considering travel should know that COVID-19 rates are high in many regions across the country, and not everyone around you will always be taking the right precautions. Keep doing the things you're doing to protect yourself and others, **even if the people are around you are not.**"

Travel and gathering indoors with extended family and friends increases the chance of getting and spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. Staying home with members of your immediate family or household is the best way to protect yourself and others.

COVID-19 is spreading rapidly in many parts of the country. **Therefore, nonessential travel, including holiday travel, is not recommended.** Traveling outside the Bay Area will increase your chance of getting infected and spreading the virus to others after your return. Additional precautions should also be taken when hosting and interacting with people traveling **to** the Bay Area, especially from other areas with widespread COVID-19.

IF YOU MUST TRAVEL, STAY INFORMED

HHS recommends that community members choose safer alternative ways to celebrate the holidays and family occasions.

If traveling is a must, please take the following steps to mitigate risk:

- Wear a face covering
- Keep at least 6 feet of physical distance from others (more distance is safer)
- Ventilate your space, if possible (for example, open the bus or taxi window)
- Wash or sanitize your hands often
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Avoid contact with anyone who is sick
- Avoid contact with frequently touched surfaces
- Get tested before and after you travel
- Get a flu shot

The following are other high risk scenarios to avoid:

1. Traveling on flights with layovers or on river/cruise boats.
2. Lodging which includes sharing spaces with many people and shared bathroom facilities.
3. Being in crowds — for example malls and movie theaters.
4. Attending a mass gathering like a sporting event, concert, or parade.



FAQ: Can you watch for *symptoms* and get tested?

In the event that you must travel, it's important to monitor yourself for symptoms for 14 days after your return and get tested immediately if you have any symptoms. Even if you don't develop symptoms, consider getting tested around 3-7 days after your return, particularly if returning from an area with high COVID-19

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transmission, or if you engaged in activities that put you at risk for getting COVID-19. If you do any activity where you might have been exposed to COVID-19, including travel, reduce your contact with other people as much as possible for 14 days, keep your distance from others, and make extra sure that you always wear a face covering anytime you're outside your household.



FAQ: Are you, your travel companions or those you are visiting at higher risk for serious illness?

Older adults and people with underlying medical conditions are more likely to get really sick if they get COVID-19. The virus can be spread among people who are not feeling any symptoms.



FAQ: Is COVID-19 spreading where you are traveling?

The more cases at your destination, the more likely you are to get infected during travel and spread the virus to others when you return. A high risk scenario is being in an area that is experiencing a surge or high levels of COVID-19, including traveling to a destination where the positivity rate is above 5%.

- To determine if your destination is experiencing high levels of COVID-19, click the [Testing Trends Tool here](#).
- Travel recommendations by destination provided by the CDC follow here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/map-and-travel-notice.html>
- For cases in the last 7 days by state, see https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases_casesper100klast7days



FAQ: Will you be able to social distance from others during your trip?

It is hard to maintain 6 feet of space from others when using public transportation like airplanes, buses, trains, and taxis. Even when traveling in your own vehicle, you may find yourself in close contact with other people and frequently touched surfaces while making stops along the way.

If you travel outside the Bay Area, it is **strongly recommended that you self-quarantine for 14 days** after your return if your activities while travelling put you at higher risk of getting COVID-19. These higher risk activities include:

- Spending time within 6 feet of people you do not normally live with, while you or anyone around you was not wearing a face mask – especially if you were indoors.
- Traveling on planes, buses, trains, public transportation, or other shared vehicles, if face masks were not worn at all times by both you and the other people in the vehicle.

Air travel

Most viruses do not spread easily on flights because of how air circulates and is filtered on airplanes. However, it is likely that you will be sitting within 6 feet of others for long periods of time, which can increase your risk of getting COVID-19. Air travel also requires spending time in security lines and airport terminals, which can bring you in close contact with other people and frequently touched surfaces. Finally, during the holidays, planes and airports may be significantly more crowded than usual, which also increases risk of transmission.

Car travel

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Don't share vehicles with people you don't live with. Vehicles are small enclosed spaces where COVID-19 can spread easily between people. If you must share a vehicle, try to ride with the same people each time, make sure everyone wears a face covering and open the windows to maximize outdoor air circulation as much as you can.

DO NOT TRAVEL IF YOU ARE SICK

You could spread COVID-19 or another infection. If you have COVID-19 symptoms, get tested and *wait for a negative test result before you start your trip*. Even if you test negative for COVID-19, you should not travel if you're feeling ill as you may spread another infection.

HOLIDAY GATHERINGS IN GENERAL

Gathering activities can put you and your family at higher risk for exposure to COVID-19. The following high-risk factors should be considered as you plan:

1. Hosting or attending a social gathering of **more than three households**, such as a holiday celebration, is prohibited by the California Department of Public Health.
2. People have traveled from distant communities or the group is made up of people from different geographic locations.
3. Spread of COVID-19 is high in the community.
4. You meet in a confined, poorly ventilated indoor space.
5. Not everyone wears a mask.
6. Physical distancing of 6ft between non-household members is not observed.
7. People freely share food and personal items with others.

If your family participates in one or more of the high risk activities listed above or you think that your family may have been exposed to COVID-19 before, during, or after the holidays, we strongly encourage taking these next steps:

- Consult with your physician about having you and your family tested for COVID-19. COVID-19 symptoms generally appear within 2 – 14 days of exposure. Your physician will discuss the correct timing of testing based on your potential exposure. Typically the first of the COVID-19 tests should be taken 5 days into the quarantine period after your return home and the second should be taken no more than 72 hours later.
- Notify the other attendees as soon as possible regarding the potential exposure
- Stay home as much as possible for 14 days after the gathering or until household member tests negative
- Avoid being around people who have higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19

The safest gathering is one that is a small, stable group that meets outdoors for a short duration and uses face coverings, distance and other safety measures.

Please review the CDC's guidance on assessing your family's [risk](#) in various activities and factors to consider for [holiday celebrations](#).

Any activity outside of your household increases chances of exposure to the virus. Be selective and space out which public activities you choose. If gathering with your small, stable group is most important, consider forgoing or delaying other activities such as a haircut or indoor dining to reduce your overall exposures and protect your group.

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**If you gather in person, keep it safe,
small, short and stable!**

OUTSIDE IS SAFER *Gather outside and follow safety guidelines*

Considerations before hosting or attending:

- Are there many or increasing cases of COVID-19 in areas where attendees live?
- Have all attendees been taking precautions against COVID-19?
- Will all attendees wear face coverings and keep physical distance at the gathering?

Do not attend if:

- Anyone in your household has COVID-19-like symptoms
- You are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 due to age or medical conditions

Hosts should let guests know safety guidelines must be followed before the event so everyone is aware.

The risk of COVID-19 transmission is highest in indoor spaces without enough ventilation. That's why gathering inside is not allowed, except as permitted under the state's [health order](#) and [Marin's Risk Reduction Order](#).

Outdoor spaces that are covered are okay, as long as 75% of the space is open to the outdoors. People may go inside to use restrooms, as long as restrooms are sanitized often and attendees only go one at a time.

- **SMALL:** *Limit gatherings to no more than 3 households* - When people from different households are together at the same time in the same space, the risk of spreading COVID-19 goes up. That's why gatherings of more than 3 different households are not allowed.
- **SHORT:** *Limit gatherings to no more than 2 hours* - The longer people gather together, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spreading. That's why gathering for longer than 2 hours is not allowed, under the state's [health order](#) and [Marin's Risk Reduction order](#).
- **STABLE:** *Do not participate in multiple gatherings with many different households* - The more people come into contact with others outside their household, the higher the risk of spreading COVID-19. That's why participating in multiple gatherings with different households is strongly discouraged. If you attend several gatherings over the holidays, keep it to the same group of people.

Safety Recommendations

- *Maintain at least 6-feet of physical distance* from people not in your household at all times, whether you're sitting or standing. More distance is safer.
- *Wear face coverings at all times, including when talking to others.* You can remove face covering briefly to eat, drink, or take medication as long as you stay at least 6 feet away from everyone outside your own household. More distance is safer.
- *Remain outside as much as possible.* If you go inside, open windows and doors to increase ventilation.
- *Wash hands with soap and water often.* If not available, use hand sanitizer.
- *Serve shared food safely.* If it is not possible to use single-serve disposable containers, food and beverages must be served by a person who washes or sanitizes their hands frequently and wears a face covering. If you are dropping off home-prepared food or drink gifts, be sure to wear a mask and disinfect or wash your hands thoroughly.

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Avoid singing, chanting, and shouting. If you cannot avoid these activities, keep your [face covering](#) on, your volume low, and at least a 6-foot distance from others. More distance and being outdoors are safer.

SAFER ALTERNATIVES FOR THANKSGIVING AND FRIENDSGIVING

The safest way to celebrate Thanksgiving and Friendsgiving is with people in the same household or to celebrate virtually. Some specific alternatives that are low risk include:

- Having a dinner with only people who live in your household.
- Having a virtual pie bake-off (e.g. best crust design wins).
- Hosting a virtual scavenger hunt.
- Making a time capsule to celebrate your friendships.
- Preparing traditional family recipes for family and neighbors, especially those at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, and delivering them in a way that does not involve contact with others.
- Having a virtual dinner and sharing recipes with friends and family.
- Shopping online rather than in person on the day after Thanksgiving (“Black Friday” or the following Monday (“Cyber Monday”).
- Watching sports events, parades, and movies from home.

SAFER ALTERNATIVES FOR DECEMBER HOLIDAYS

The safest way to celebrate December Holidays is with people in the same household or to celebrate virtually. Some specific alternatives that are low risk include:

- Having a Holiday movie night.
- Participating in Holiday-themed activities at home (e.g., making Dreidel gift sets, candle making, Adinkra printing, or baking cookies).
- Participating in online parties or contests (e.g., ugly sweater contest, gingerbread house contest, Challah bread baking party, or making your own Kinara).
- Dressing up homes and yards with Holiday themed decorations (e.g., cutting out paper snowflakes or painting/decorating ornaments).
- Participating in a Holiday scavenger hunt in your neighborhood, and looking for Holiday-related objects (e.g. lights, snowmen, decorated houses, funny holiday sweaters) while maintaining physical distance from people from outside your household.
- Attending a car parade that complies with public health guidance, including:
 - Drive-by events or contests where individuals dress up or decorate their vehicles.
 - Drive-through events where individuals remain in their vehicles and drive through an area with Holiday displays.
 - Drive-in events where individuals can watch a synchronized light show with music in front of a house while the participants remain in their vehicle.
- Attending holiday movie nights at drive-in theaters (must comply with the state drive-in movie theater guidance).
- Eating holiday themed meals at outdoor restaurants (must comply with the state restaurant guidance).
- Viewing holiday themed art installations at an outdoor museum (must comply with the state museum guidance).

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UNDERAGE DRINKING & DRUG PREVENTION

The holidays are a busy time, typically filled with get togethers, parties and lots of free time for our teens. With a COVID-19 and following various safety precautions are top of mind, we imagine that **underage drinking prevention** probably is not. Yet, during the holidays, our youth are often presented with additional opportunities to engage in underage drinking.

As you probably know, our community's vaping, cannabis use, binge drinking, alcohol and other drug use rates are among the highest in the state and the country – for both teens and adults. Now is a good time to remember the importance of **modeling healthy behavior** with respect to our own alcohol and drug use. Our teens are watching, often more than we realize.

Parent Modeling. We can learn so much from our own students who navigate these issues and have eyes on adults. A local student newspaper featured an insightful opinion piece reflecting on parental drinking, from the little league bleachers and around the kiddie pools to gatherings at home. Read it [here](#). The piece ends with this poignant reminder: *Marin youth "should be able to look to their parents for guidance - and parents should know that when they're under the influence, their children can be influenced too."*

Marin County's [Raising the Bar](#) program is one of many programs in our county that encourages adults to be mindful of their drinking in the presence of youth by asking parents to refrain from serving and consuming alcohol at youth-oriented events. We are fortunate to have community partners to aid you with tools to keep your child healthy and safe, including Marin Prevention Network, Marin Healthy Youth Partnerships, Be the Influence and other organizations focused on reducing underage substance use.

[Be the Influence](#) believes parents are still the biggest influence in their teens' lives. Although it is appropriate to give teens some freedom and independence, they still need our supervision and engagement. Be the Influence gives parents tools and information to help their teens and be a positive influence in their lives. If you haven't joined this program, I encourage you to do so before the holidays.

Parties. Avoid opportunities for underage drinking. Marin towns and municipalities have [Social Host Ordinances](#). These laws impose fines and hold the homeowner (resident) and/or the young person hosting a party responsible. Many towns strictly enforce these ordinances, regardless of whether the parent is at home or not. If you are going to be out of town, you can contact your local police departments for a "vacation check" or consider asking a neighbor to keep an eye on your home.

Parenting Tips. For additional parenting tips on **Preventing Childhood Alcohol Use** (which also applies to other drugs) by NIH's National Institute on Alcohol Abuse go to [NIH](#) and Marin Healthy Youth Partnership's [Parenting Tips](#).

Source Materials

[CDC Holiday Celebration & Small Gatherings](#)