



IDPH Issues COVID-19 Holiday Season Safety Tips: Plan Ahead With Alternatives

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SPRINGFIELD – As Illinoisans prepare to spend the holidays with family and friends, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is offering recommendations on how to celebrate safer during the COVID-19 pandemic. During a time when social distancing and limiting the number of people at gatherings is important, special considerations should be taken.

“COVID-19 has changed the way we work, live, and play, and will now change how we plan to celebrate the holidays,” said IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike. “While the safest way to celebrate is with members of your household and connecting with others virtually, we know, for many, the holidays are all about family and friends, so we want to provide some tips on how to celebrate safer.”

Traveling increases the chance of spreading COVID-19. When planning travel, consider the mode of transportation. Traveling by plane, train, or bus can mean standing in lines and sitting less than 6 feet from people for long periods of time. Traveling by car may include stops along the way for gas, food, and bathroom break. Decrease your risk by consistently wearing face coverings during travel.

If you are hosting a holiday gathering, limit the number of guests and try to have as many activities outside as weather permits. If your gathering needs to be inside, try to increase air flow by partially opening a couple windows. Please prepare yourself and your guests to wear masks indoors when not eating and drinking.

Limit your activities in the two weeks before your gathering and ask your guests to do the same. This will decrease the risk of exposure to the virus and further spread.

Try to do gift shopping online by looking at local store websites and choosing pick-up options. Grocery shopping online with delivery and curbside pick-up is also available in many locations. If you need to shop in-person, try to go at a time when stores are not as busy.

Think about the seating arrangements if you are planning a meal. Keep members of the same household together and try to put space between one family and another.

When serving food, avoid a buffet-style or potluck setting and consider having one person serve all the food so that multiple people are not handling the serving utensils. Also try to limit the number of people going in and out of areas where food is being prepared – like the kitchen and dining room.

If you are sick, do not travel and do not attend gatherings and celebrations. Even if your symptoms are mild, you may still be able to infect others, and no one wants the gift of sickness this season.

To help stave off illness, get your flu vaccine now. It takes the body several weeks after receiving the vaccine to build up antibodies that will help protect you from flu, so get it now to help protect you and others during the holidays. Roll your #SleeveUp and get your flu shot.

For more holiday safety tips, go to the IDPH website under [guidance](#).