



Southeastern Idaho Public Health (SIPH) recognizes the great significance of tradition and celebration when it comes to holidays, like those in the fall and winter months. However, as we look for ways to balance life amidst a pandemic, health and safety must be at the forefront. SIPH wants its communities to be aware that many traditional activities, in-person gatherings with people outside of your household, and travel to areas outside of your home county can greatly increase your risk for exposure to COVID-19 and spreading viruses. Frequently, contact with infected household members, family, and close friends are ways an individual becomes exposed. No one wants to think that the people closest to them could pose a threat, but community spread is reaching new highs in southeast Idaho, and many others.

This season, the safest celebrations are those that involve your household members, allow for consistent social distancing, are outdoors, include good hygiene practices, follow all health and safety measures encouraged for COVID-19, and adhere to any local or state public health orders in place. For those planning for upcoming celebrations, SIPH urges people to opt for low-risk activities, as outlined in this guidance for safer celebrations.

It may feel unusual wearing masks around guests, having a virtual celebration, or not sitting around a crowded dining room table, but these are necessary and important sacrifices. Remember, this pandemic will not last forever. We will be able to celebrate together in the future. These are temporary sacrifices we are making to protect our community and the people we love.

*If you do not feel well, have a respiratory or gastrointestinal illness, or may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, you should not participate in in-person holiday gatherings.*

#### **AVOID THESE HIGH-RISK ACTIVITIES**

- Traveling outside of the county to locations with higher COVID-19 rates than your county
- Attending or hosting large indoor gatherings with people from outside your household, including close friends and family
- Attending sporting events, parades, performances
- In-person shopping with crowds
- Using alcohol or drugs, which can cloud judgement and increase risky behaviors

#### **MODERATE RISK ACTIVITIES**

- Having a small group outdoor dinner with family and friends who live in the same county while using everyday prevention measures including wearing masks and social distancing
- Taking your family to a local pumpkin patch or picking apples at a local apple orchard with social distancing

#### **LOWER RISK ACTIVITIES**

- Having a small Thanksgiving dinner with only your household members
- 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 doesn't involve contact with others
- Hosting a virtual dinner with your extended friends and family using video technology
- Playing virtual games with family and friends

- Watching sporting events, parades, movies, and holiday programs at home with your household members
- Shopping for Black Friday or Cyber Monday deals online – follow your local retailers on social media to shop local

### **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS – HOSTING / ATTENDING / TRAVEL**

*In-person gatherings with those outside of your household (even if they are family members) as well as travel to areas outside of the community you live in are considered high-risk given rapidly increasing case rates in many parts of the country. SIPH recommends that you find alternatives this year to protect yourself and loved ones.*

*If you choose to gather with those outside of your household and/or travel, public health asks you to consider the following safety measures.*

#### **Planning / Hosting**

- Remember that per the state’s Stage 2 Stay Healthy Order, gatherings are restricted to 10 or fewer people in Idaho
- Consider your most vulnerable family members when planning; utilize the [CDC’s recommendations for hosting gatherings or cookouts](#)
- When deciding how many people to invite to your gathering, consider the amount of space you have and the ability to maintain social distancing during the event
- Consider setting firm start and end times for the gathering
- Consider ways to reduce the number of people congregating in potentially close spaces, like a kitchen, when cooking or during clean up
- Consider using paper goods that can be disposed of
- Keep the group as small as possible, and remember to practice social distancing and ensure everyone in attendance wears a mask over their nose and mouth
- Consider creating ground rules for any gatherings and make them clear to those you invite. Ground rules may include:
  - Asking all guests to strictly avoid contact with people outside of their households for 14 days before the gathering.
  - Make it clear that face coverings will be worn and encourage people to bring their own
  - Create and share a plan for any necessary contact of attendees, should someone become ill
- Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces frequently
- If having an indoor gathering, improve ventilation by opening doors and windows as much as possible; keep in mind that while outdoor activities are safer than indoor activities, the virus can still spread outdoors
- If anyone in your household does not feel well, has recently been around someone with COVID-19, or is awaiting a test result, cancel the gathering

#### **Attendees / Travel**

- Wear a mask at all times when around people who don’t live in your household to reduce the risk of spreading the virus
- Avoid singing, chanting, or shouting, especially when not wearing a mask and within 6 feet of others.
- While the holidays are traditionally times when people travel long distances to celebrate with family SIPH recommends avoiding travel this year, especially to areas with higher COVID-19 activity
- If anyone in your household does not feel well, has recently been around someone with COVID-19, or is awaiting a test result, do not attend the gathering

### **CONSIDERATIONS FOR EVERYONE**

- Get your flu vaccine; remember, it takes up to 2 weeks for a flu vaccine to provide protection
- Consistently follow local public health orders in place and Idaho’s Stage 3 Stay Healthy Order
- [Wear face coverings](#)
- Keep at least six feet between you and others

- Stay home if you are sick
- Wash your hands often
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Disinfect surfaces and objects regularly
- Take time to care for your mental health – [seek free resources and reach out to others](#)

**Resources for Use + More Information:**

- State of Idaho Stay Healthy Order – <https://rebound.idaho.gov/stages-of-reopening/>
- CDC - Holidays Guidance: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html>
- COVID-19 Event Risk Assessment Planning Tool: <https://covid19risk.biosci.gatech.edu/>
- For southeast Idaho specific information about the novel coronavirus, please visit <https://siphidaho.org/coronavirus.php>
- For Idaho-specific information about the novel coronavirus, please visit <https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/>
- Join us Monday-Friday at 11 am for Facebook Live at <https://facebook.com/siphidaho>.
- SIPH has a COVID Hotline to field questions from the community and is open Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. You can reach the hotline at (208) 234-5875.

