Socializing during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The holidays are a time when we look forward to gathering with family and friends. This year, the coronavirus (the virus that causes COVID-19) is circulating throughout the US and the globe, and we need to find new ways of gathering in order to stay safe. Here are some general tips to stay healthy and help you make decisions about celebrating the holidays 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.
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*.
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. Everyone can follow these tips, which we know help slow the spread and limit exposure.
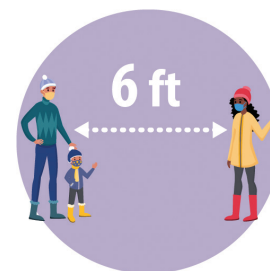
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Holiday/special occasion strategies to stay healthy

1. *Have a small celebration* with members of your household.

2. If you are getting together with people who do not live in your household, *gather only outdoors* and keep the group small. 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. Plan ahead, and make your expectations clear to all who will attend.

3. *Limit* nonessential travel.

4. *Set expectations* related to outdoor gatherings, including what to do if weather is inclement.

5. *Deliver holiday 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

6. *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!

7. *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
Make time to unwind	Connect with others
Set goals and priorities	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
   – Influenza

Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC)
• www.cdc.gov

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