

PRESS RELEASE

State public health officials offer tips for a safe and healthy Thanksgiving

Residents urged to keep Thanksgiving celebrations small to limit the risk of COVID-19 exposure

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

10/27/2020

Department of Public Health

MEDIA CONTACT

Katheleen Conti, Assistant Director of Media Relations

Phone

617-624-5006 (tel:6176245006)

Online

Katheleen.M.Conti@MassMail.State.MA.US (mailto:Katheleen.M.Conti@MassMail.State.MA.US)

BOSTON — Traveling and gathering with family and friends for Thanksgiving will look different this year to keep loved ones safe from COVID-19. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) today provided guidance for holiday celebrations to help limit the risk of exposure to COVID-19 and reduce the spread of the virus.

As part of the guidance, DPH reminds residents and communities to be aware that gatherings and events are subject to the current state [gathering size limits](#) (/info-details/covid-19-state-of-emergency#limits-on-gatherings-) as well as applicable [sector-specific workplace safety standards](#) (/resource/reopening-sector-specific-protocols-and-best-practices). Thanksgiving weekend is traditionally one of the

busiest travel holidays of the year and anyone considering travel should be aware of and follow the [Massachusetts COVID-19 Travel Order \(/info-details/covid-19-travel-order\)](#).

[Tips for a Safe and Healthy Thanksgiving \(/Thanksgiving2020\)](#)

Any time you're near people you don't live with:

- [Wear a mask \(/news/mask-up-ma\)](#) when not eating or drinking
- Wash your hands often with soap and water
- Stay at least six feet apart from others
- Consider if those around you may be at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, such as older adults or those with certain medical conditions, and take extra precautions
- If gathering indoors, improve ventilation by opening windows and doors

Lower Risk Celebrations

- Limit in-person holiday gatherings to only people you live with or limit to a small group of individuals with whom you are regularly in contact
- Gatherings with more people pose more risks. As a reminder, gatherings in Massachusetts are subject to [gathering size limits \(/info-details/covid-19-state-of-emergency#limits-on-gatherings\)](#).
- Keep visits short – gatherings that last longer pose more risk than short gatherings.
 - Host a **virtual** holiday dinner with extended family or friends, especially if they are at higher risk for illness from COVID-19. Prepare traditional family recipes for family and neighbors, especially those at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, and deliver them in a way that doesn't involve contact with others

Higher Risk Celebrations

Including people who are not in your household or limited social network increases the risk of contracting or spreading illness. If you plan on celebrating the holidays in person with people you don't live with:

- Wear your mask and watch your distance at all times.
- Do not share food, drink, or any utensils.
- Encourage guests to bring food and drinks for themselves and for members of their own household only.
- Wear a mask while preparing or serving food to others who don't live in your household.
- Consider having one person serve all the food so that multiple people are not handling the serving utensils.
- Use single-use options or identify one person to serve sharable items, like salad dressings, food containers, plates and utensils, and condiments.

- Avoid any self-serve food or drink options, such as buffets or buffet-style potlucks, salad bars, and condiment or drink stations.
- For 14 days before and after holiday gatherings, minimize contact with other people, and only leave home for essential services like going to work, buying groceries, and appointments with doctors; OR,
- Obtain a negative result from a molecular (PCR) SARS-CoV2 test, on a sample obtained within 72 hours of the celebration. Information about where to obtain a test can be found at [www.mass.gov/GetTesting \(/covid-19-testing\)](https://www.mass.gov/GetTesting/covid-19-testing).
- Seat people with plenty of space from one another while dining.
- Consider small seating table arrangements in multiple rooms with plenty of spacing, instead of a large family table.
- If gathering indoors, improve ventilation by opening windows and doors.

Avoid these activities

- Avoid sharing food and drinks.
- Avoid shaking hands and hugging. Wave and verbally greet others instead.
- Avoid singing, dancing, and shouting. These activities increase your chances of catching COVID-19 through the air.
- Avoid in-person gatherings with people at a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19, such as older adults and people with certain medical conditions.

Other Important Considerations

- **Community levels of COVID-19** – Higher levels of COVID-19 cases and community spread in the gathering location, as well as where attendees are coming from, increase the risk of infection and spread among attendees. Consider the number and rate of COVID-19 cases in your community and in the community where you plan to celebrate when deciding whether to host or attend a holiday celebration. Find information on [cases in Massachusetts cities and towns \(/info-details/community-level-covid-19-data-reporting\)](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/community-level-covid-19-data-reporting) and information on [cases across the United States \(https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases_casesinlast7days\)](https://www.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases_casesinlast7days).
- **People with or exposed to COVID-19 should avoid attending in-person celebrations.** Do not host or participate in any in-person festivities if you or anyone in your household:
 - Has been diagnosed with COVID-19 and has not met the criteria for when it is safe to be around others
 - Has [symptoms of COVID-19 \(https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html)
 - Is awaiting COVID-19 viral test results
 - May have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days
 - Is at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19, such as older adults or those with certain medical conditions.

All residents are also encouraged to get the flu vaccine. For additional information, please refer to the holiday guidance provided by the CDC at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html#thanksgiving

(<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html#thanksgiving>)

###

Media Contact

Katheleen Conti, Assistant Director of Media Relations

Phone

617-624-5006 (tel:6176245006)

Online

Katheleen.M.Conti@MassMail.State.MA.US (mailto:Katheleen.M.Conti@MassMail.State.MA.US)



150 YEARS
OF ADVANCING
PUBLIC
HEALTH

Department of Public Health (/orgs/department-of-public-health)

DPH promotes the health and well-being of all residents by ensuring access to high-quality public health and healthcare services, and by focusing on prevention, wellness, and health equity in all people.

More (/orgs/department-of-public-health)