

NEWS

For Immediate Release

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Central District Health urges people to find safer ways to celebrate upcoming holidays

Celebrations with household members pose the lowest risk

Central District Health, ID — As COVID-19 case counts continue on a steady climb throughout Central District Health's (CDH) four-county region, and with fall and winter holidays quickly approaching, CDH is urging people to choose lower-risk ways of honoring traditions and celebrating with family and friends in the coming months.

CDH has released [guidance](#) for the safer celebration of fall and winter holidays. The guidance outlines high, moderate, and lower risk activities, and asks the public to opt for the safest of options, which include those with household members only and follow local and state health orders in place.

CDH 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 is how people become exposed to COVID-19. "No one wants to think that the people closest to them could pose a threat, and it can feel strange wearing a mask and keeping your distance from those you know well. We recognize it's going to be tough to not host a big family dinner or say 'no' to a holiday party this year, but these scenarios are exactly where COVID is spreading in our communities and we must make choices right now that will protect ourselves and loved ones," said Russ Duke, District Director for CDH.

CDH reminds Ada County residents that the public health order currently in place limits social events, like a Thanksgiving gathering, to 10 or fewer people. Elsewhere in the state, Idaho's Stay Healthy Order limits gathering sizes to 50 or fewer.

Among the lower-risk activities outlined in the guidance:

- 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

“One thing we learned with this year’s Halloween, is that many people found new, fun ways to celebrate that were different from their traditional celebrations. We are asking people to do the same – get creative, find new ways to celebrate, and connect with your family and friends that don’t involve in-person contact. It’s not going to be easy for many of us, but these are only temporary sacrifices to protect our community and those we care most about,” added Duke.

While CDH recommends that people do not hold gatherings with those outside of their household, or travel this year, the holiday guidance document also includes safety considerations for those who are considering these higher-risk activities.

Considerations for everyone

No matter what your plans are for celebrating the holidays, CDH urges everyone to do the following:

- 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
- Take time to care for your mental health
- Wash your hands often
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Disinfect surfaces and objects regularly

Caring for your mental health during the holidays

CDH recognizes that outside of the pandemic, the holidays alone be a stressful time for many. Given the impacts of COVID-19 on our lives, many people are experiencing increased stress, worry or anxiousness going into the fall and winter holidays. CDH encourages residents to make sure they are caring for their own mental health by reaching out to others, or resources for support, and checking in on other people in their life to see how they are doing.

Several free resources are available to Idahoans through the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare and the Idaho Office of Emergency Management:

- [COVID Help Now Line](#) – call or text 986-867-1073 | Toll-Free 866-947-5186
 - Staffed 8 am to 8 pm Mountain Time, 7 days a week
 - Available via phone, text, or chat; anonymous – responders do not classify, label, or diagnose people and no records or case files are kept. Learn more at www.ioem.idaho.gov/covidhelpnow
- Coronavirus Counseling Assistance for Frontline Workers | 866-536-0239
 - Learn more at <https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/COVID19FrontlineWorkerServices.pdf>

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