

Pandemic: CDC discouraging Halloween trick-or-treating

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As we head into fall and winter federal health officials are urging that we continue social distancing and limit large gatherings to slow the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued specific guidelines discouraging Halloween activities, such as trick-or-treating, and other large gatherings.

The following information is from the CDC website.

As many people in the United States begin to plan for fall and winter holiday celebrations, CDC offers the following considerations to help protect individuals, their families, friends, and communities from COVID-19.

These considerations are meant to supplement—not replace—any state, local, territorial, or tribal health and safety laws, rules, and regulations with which holiday gatherings must comply. When planning to host a

holiday celebration, you should assess current COVID-19 levels in your community to determine whether to postpone, cancel, or limit the number of attendees.

Virus spread risk at holiday celebrations

Celebrating virtually or with members of your own household pose low risk for spread. In-person gatherings pose varying levels of risk. Event organizers and attendees should consider the risk of virus spread based on event size and use of mitigation strategies, as outlined in the Considerations for Events and Gatherings.

There are several factors that contribute to the risk of getting infected or infecting others with the virus that causes COVID-19 at a holiday celebration. In combination, these factors will create various amounts of risk, so it is important to consider them individually and together:

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. Family and friends should consider the number and rate of COVID-19 cases in their community and in the community where they plan to celebrate when considering whether to host or attend a holiday celebration. Information on the number of cases in an area can be found on the area's health department website.

The location of the gathering – Indoor gatherings generally pose more risk than outdoor gatherings. Indoor gatherings with poor ventilation pose more risk than those with good ventilation, such as those with open windows or doors.

The duration of the gathering – Gatherings that last longer pose more risk than shorter gatherings.

The number of people at the gathering – Gatherings with more people pose more risk than gatherings with fewer people. CDC does not have a limit or recommend a specific number of attendees for gatherings. The size of a holiday gathering should be determined based on the ability to reduce or limit contact between attendees, the risk of spread between attendees, and state, local, territorial, or tribal health and safety laws, rules, and regulations.

The locations attendees are traveling from – Gatherings with attendees who are traveling from different places pose a higher risk than gatherings with attendees who live in the same area. Higher levels of COVID-19 cases and community spread in the gathering location, or where attendees are coming from, increase the risk of infection and spread among attendees.

The behaviors of attendees prior to the gathering – Gatherings with attendees who are not adhering to social distancing (staying at least 6 feet apart), mask wearing, hand washing, and other prevention behaviors pose more risk than gatherings with attendees who are engaging in these preventative behaviors.

The behaviors of attendees during the gathering – Gatherings with more preventive measures, such as mask wearing, social distancing, and hand washing, in place pose less risk than gatherings where fewer or no preventive measures are being implemented.

General considerations for fall and winter holidays

Fall and winter celebrations, such as Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Halloween, Día de los Muertos, Navratri, Diwali, Thanksgiving, Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe, Hanukah, Kwanzaa, Christmas, and New Year's, typically include large gatherings of families and friends, crowded parties, and travel that may put people at increased risk for COVID-19.

Before you celebrate

Hosting a holiday gathering

If you will be hosting a celebration, follow CDC tips for hosting gatherings. Below are some additional considerations for hosting a holiday celebration:

Host outdoor activities rather than indoor activities as much as possible. If hosting an outdoor event is not possible, and you choose to host an indoor event, avoid crowded, poorly ventilated, or fully enclosed indoor spaces.

Increase ventilation by opening windows and doors to the extent that is safe and feasible based on the weather.

Host activities with only people from your local area as much as possible.

Limit numbers of attendees as much as possible.

Provide updated information to your guests about any COVID-19 safety guidelines and steps in place to prevent the spread of the virus.

Provide or encourage attendees to bring supplies to help you and others stay healthy. For example, extra masks (do not share or swap with others), hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, and tissues.

If you are planning in-person holiday gatherings with people outside of your household, consider asking all guests to strictly avoid contact with people outside of their households for 14 days before the gathering.

Attending a holiday gathering

If you will be attending a celebration that someone else is hosting, follow CDC Considerations for attending an event or gathering. Below are some additional considerations for attending an in-person holiday gathering:

Outdoor activities are safer than indoor activities. If participating in an outdoor event is not possible, and you choose to attend an indoor event, avoid crowded, poorly ventilated, and fully enclosed indoor spaces.

Increase ventilation by opening windows and doors to the extent that is safe and feasible based on the weather.

Check with the event host, organizer, or event venue for updated information about any COVID-19 safety guidelines and if they have steps in place to prevent the spread of the virus.

Bring supplies to help you and others stay healthy. For example, bring extra masks (do not share or swap with others), hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, and tissues.

If you are planning to attend in-person holiday gatherings with people outside of your household, consider strictly avoiding contact with people outside of your household for 14 days before the gathering.

Holiday travel

Traveling increases the chance of getting and spreading COVID-19. Staying home is the best way to protect yourself and others. Use information from the following webpages to decide whether to go on holiday travel:

Travel During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Know Your Travel Risk

Know When to Delay Your Travel to Avoid Spreading COVID-19

If you decide to travel, follow these safety measures during your trip to protect yourself and others from COVID-19:

Wear a mask to keep your nose and mouth covered when in public places.

Avoid close contact by staying at least 6 feet apart (about 2 arms' length) from anyone who is not from your household.

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol).

Avoid contact with anyone who is sick.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.