Safety Tips for Holiday Events

As the holidays are approaching, many of us are eager to participate in our typical family traditions. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented us with many safety concerns and challenges. There is a level of risk any time we leave our homes. The COVID-19 pandemic is worsening and even small household gatherings have been a major source of spread. Please consider modifications you can make to your holiday plans in order to keep your family and your community safe and healthy.

If you are planning to attend or host a holiday gathering, please be mindful of these safety tips:

➢ **Keep it Small!** – Indoor gatherings should be limited to **10 people max**, even fewer guests if your living space can't allow for 6 feet of space between non-household members. Large indoor gatherings are high risk!

➢ **Location, Location, Location** – Opt outdoors whenever you can for better airflow and social distancing. If you're indoors, open the windows to improve ventilation.

➢ **Time Limits** – The longer a social event is, the more risk there is for exposure/spread. The MA Stay-at-Home Order advises residents to remain at home between 5am-10pm and only leave home for essential needs like work, going to the pharmacy/grocery store, or seeking medical care. Any social gatherings must end by 9:30pm.

➢ **Choose your guests wisely**: Think about the behaviors of your guests *before* and *during* your event.
   o Individuals who don't consistently following the safety protocols like wearing facial coverings, social distancing, hand hygiene, and other preventive behaviors pose a greater risk to you and your family.
   o You may need to politely un-invite a guest who has recently traveled to a high-risk state and hasn't followed the MA orders for quarantining/testing.
   o Make sure your guests know ahead of time that you'll need them to follow the recommended safety measures while in your home in order to attend. Having non-household members wear masks and practice social distancing will reduce your risk.
   o Use of drugs and alcohol at gatherings can impair a person's ability to follow safety rules.

Party Rules in the time of COVID-19
   ▪ Require all guests to do a health check before coming to your home.
   ▪ Require all guests to wear a mask at all times, indoors and outdoors, except when eating and drinking.
   ▪ Keep 6 feet of distance between all non-household members at all times.
   ▪ Avoid direct contact with non-household members such as with hugging, kissing, or handshaking. These behaviors increase your risk of exposure and getting sick.
   ▪ Avoid shouting and singing as this can increase the risk of transmission.
   ▪ Clean and disinfect your home before and after any gatherings, paying particular attention to common spaces and high-touch surfaces.

Meal Time Safety Tips
   ✓ Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol before and after meals and before and after preparing any food. Make sure you clean your hands for at least 20 seconds and cover all surfaces of your hands. Make sure your guests follow your lead with this too.
   ✓ Consider having one person serve all the food so everyone isn't handling the same serving utensils. Wear masks when serving food.
   ✓ Don't share food or drinks from the same plate, cup, or utensils.
   ✓ Make sure your guests store their masks in a clean, safe space when they are eating.
   ✓ Limit crowds around food and remind guests about practicing 6 feet of social distancing.
   ✓ Wash dishes and any linens immediately after your gathering with warm, soapy water.

Holiday Season Activities and COVID-19 Risk

Lower Risk Activities:
- Small dinner with family and friends who live in your household
- Virtual dinner with family and friends

Moderate Risk Activities:
- Small outdoor dinner with family and friends who live in your community

Higher Risk Activities: *Please Avoid*
- Going shopping in crowded stores before, on, or after Thanksgiving
- Large indoor gatherings with people from outside your household

TIPS FOR A SAFE THANKSGIVING

Do's
- DO WEAR A MASK WHEN NOT EATING OR DRINKING
- DO KEEP YOUR DISTANCE - AT LEAST 6 FEET
- DO WASH YOUR HANDS OFTEN WITH SOAP AND WATER
- DO IMPROVE VENTILATION BY OPENING WINDOWS AND DOORS

Don'ts
- DON'T SHARE FOOD FROM THE SAME PLATE OR SHARE DRINKS
- DON'T SHAKE HANDS OR HUG. WAVE OR VERBALLY GREET OTHERS INSTEAD
- DON'T SING, DANCE, OR SHOUT WHICH INCREASE CHANCES OF CATCHING THE AIRBORNE VIRUS
- DON'T GATHER WITH HIGH RISK INDIVIDUALS SUCH AS OLDER ADULTS AND PEOPLE WITH CERTAIN MEDICAL CONDITIONS

Please remember to follow the Massachusetts Safety Orders:
Social gathering orders: https://www.mass.gov/doc/covid-19-order-54/download
The Stay-at-Home Advisory: https://www.mass.gov/news/stay-at-home-advisory
The MA COVID-19 Travel Order: https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-travel-order

Don't host or attend a holiday gathering if:
- You have any COVID-related symptoms
- You are waiting for a COVID test result
- You were diagnosed with COVID-19 and still completing your isolation period.
- You were identified as a close contact to someone diagnosed with COVID-19 and are still completing your quarantine.

Factors that increase risk for severe illness
- Cancer
- Chronic kidney disease
- COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- Heart conditions
- Sickle cell disease
- Obesity
- Pregnancy
- Smoking
- Type 2 diabetes
- Compromised immune systems and anyone who has had a solid organ transplant.

Factors that *might* increase your risk of severe illness
- Asthma
- Cystic fibrosis
- Cerebrovascular disease
- Hypertension/high blood pressure
- Liver disease
- Overweight
- Thalassemia
- Pulmonary fibrosis
- Type 1 diabetes
- Neurological disorders like dementia
- Immunocompromised (HIV, taking corticosteroids, bone/blood transplant, or taking immune weakening meds

Additional Online Resources:
- https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html
- https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/personal-social-activities.html#gatherings
- https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-during-covid19.html
- https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-risk.html