Interim Guidance for Winter Holiday Gatherings  
(November 16, 2021)

Any scenario in which people gather poses a risk for COVID-19 transmission. Follow the guidance below to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 while participating in winter activities and holiday traditions.

Before gathering, attending events, or traveling, NCDHHS strongly recommends that everyone go to Find Your Spot, Take Your Shot and get vaccinated. For guidance on vaccinations, please refer to our Interim Guidance for Individuals Who Have Been Vaccinated Against COVID-19 and Recommendations for Protecting Each Other.

**Holiday Travel**

To protect yourself and others, delay your travel plans and stay home until you are fully vaccinated.

- If you do travel and are NOT fully vaccinated, get tested 1-3 days before and 3-5 days after travel AND stay home and self-quarantine for a full 7 days after travel, even if you test negative at 3-5 days.
- All individuals regardless of vaccine status should follow CDC’s guidance for travel during COVID-19 and NCDHHS’s guidance for public transportation.

**Gathering during the holidays:**

Attending outdoor or virtual events presents a lower risk for the spread of COVID-19 than events that are in-person and indoors. Consider avoiding large in-person social gatherings.

**If you do gather:**

- Get your COVID-19 vaccine and encourage everyone else to get vaccinated. NCDHHS strongly recommends that hosts direct their guests and family members to Find Your Spot, Take Your Shot and encourage them to get vaccinated before the event.
  - For guidance on vaccinations, please refer to our Interim Guidance for Individuals Who Have Been Vaccinated Against COVID-19 and Recommendations for Protecting Each Other.
- Guests who are not fully vaccinated should wear a face covering and maintain physical distance from others, especially when they are indoors.
- Guests who are fully vaccinated should also wear a mask in all indoor public spaces if the gathering is in a county with high or substantial levels of transmission, as defined by the CDC.
- Host gatherings outdoors, when possible.
  - If gathering indoors, use a space that is large enough to allow for physical distancing and consider limiting the number of attendees. If possible, increase circulation of outdoor air by opening windows and doors.
- If you are sick or have symptoms, do not host, or attend a gathering.
- For tips on general food safety, follow CDC’s guidance for Food Safety for the Holidays.
For safer holiday celebrations consider:

- Enjoying meals with individuals in your household only.
- Practicing religious holiday customs at home.
- Preparing and delivering a meal to a neighbor.
- Watching religious and cultural performances virtually or outdoors.
- Attending religious ceremonies or holiday events virtually or outdoors.

Organizers of holiday-related events should create and implement a plan to minimize the opportunity for COVID-19 transmission at their events. For specific action items and recommendations, please refer to our Events and Festivals guidance.

Staying apart brings us together.
Protect your family and neighbors.

Learn more at nc.gov/covid19.