



# Student Interim Guidance for Safer Holiday Breaks

## (December 8, 2020)

**Guidelines for Safer Holiday Breaks:** Institutions of higher education have seen transmission of COVID-19 and clusters of cases throughout the fall semester. This guidance is intended for students to encourage safer behaviors during holiday breaks and a safe return to campus for the following semester. While most healthy young adults who test positive have a mild course of illness even if they have symptoms, the risk of severe illness may be much greater for persons exposed to them. This is an important reason students should do all they can to prevent infection.

### Leaving Campus

If you travel during the holiday break, follow CDC's guidance for [travel during COVID-19](#) and keep practicing the [3 Ws \(Wear, Wait, Wash\)](#) to protect yourself and your family, friends and community. Remember that face coverings are required indoors when you are with individuals who you do not live with, including visiting someone else's house or when you are having guests over at your own home. Face coverings must also be worn outside if you cannot consistently maintain 6ft of distance apart from non-household members. (As a reminder, face coverings offer a protection against spread of infectious respiratory droplets, and also a significant level individual protection against inhaling infectious droplets others may produce near those wearing them.)

#### Screening Test:

- CDC guidance recommends a screening COVID-19 test prior to and after travel. Get tested 1-3 days before your flight. Get tested 3-5 days after travel AND stay home for 7 days after travel.
  - **Even if you test negative, stay home for the full 7 days.**
  - **If you don't get tested, it's safest to stay home for 10 days after travel.**
- If you do have a screening test, also consider the following important information:
  - A negative test only gives you information for that point in time. A negative test does not mean you will remain negative at any time point after that test.
  - Screening tests may miss some infections, particularly if done using rapid or "point of care" tests.
  - **Even if you have a negative test, you should wear a mask, physically distance, avoid crowds and indoor crowded places, wash your hands frequently, monitor yourself for symptoms, and minimize contact with people at high risk of complications of COVID-19.**

#### When to [Quarantine or Isolate](#)

**Quarantine** is the word used to talk about avoiding others long enough to prevent spreading infection themselves (even if not having symptoms), after having been exposed or potentially exposed to persons spreading infectious droplets. **Isolation** is the word used to talk about staying away from others after

testing positive, for as long as there is a risk such a person spreads the infection through infected respiratory droplets.

- **Quarantining for Widespread Transmission:** If you are leaving a campus or county that is experiencing widespread transmission or has clusters of COVID-19 cases, you should quarantine and monitor your health for [symptoms of COVID-19](#).
  - As of December 2, 2020, the CDC states: Quarantine can be ended prior to day 14 in either of the following scenarios:
    - 10 days of quarantine have been completed and the following criteria are met:
      - No symptoms have been reported during daily monitoring.
    - 7 days of quarantine have been completed and the following criteria are met:
      - No symptoms have been reported during daily monitoring; and
      - The individual has **received results of a negative antigen or PCR/molecular test** on a test taken no earlier than day 5 of quarantine.
- **If quarantine is discontinued before day 14, the individual must continue to monitor symptoms and strictly adhere to all non-pharmaceutical interventions** (e.g. wear a mask, practice social distancing) through 14 days after the date of last exposure.
- **Symptomatic Individuals should self-isolate:** If you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 you should isolate yourself and get tested. You can contact your health care provider to get tested or locate a testing site using [Find My Testing Place](#). If you test positive, you should follow the isolation criteria below.
- **Quarantining for Known Exposure:** If you have been identified as a close contact to a known positive case, you should quarantine and get tested for COVID-19. If you test positive and/or develop symptoms, follow the isolation criteria for symptomatic or asymptomatic individuals described below. Even if you test negative and do not develop symptoms, you should remain in quarantine as summarized above and described in details at [this CDC web site](#), as well as below.
- **Isolation for Symptomatic Individuals:** If you are diagnosed with COVID-19 and have symptoms, or are presumed positive by a medical professional due to symptoms, you should isolate until:
  - You have no fever for at least 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medicine) AND
  - Your other symptoms have improved (e.g., coughing, shortness of breath) AND
  - **At least 10 days have passed since your symptoms began.**
- **Isolation for Asymptomatic Individuals:** If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 but do not have symptoms, you should isolate **until 10 days have passed since the date of your first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test**. If you develop symptoms, follow the isolation criteria for symptomatic individuals described above.

#### How to Quarantine or Isolate

- Stay in your home or residence as much as possible.
  - Limit time outside your residence to essential activities only, such as to get medical care (after calling in advance) or to get take-out meals if no one is available to bring them to you.
  - If you have to leave your home or residence, ALWAYS wear a face covering.
  - Do not use public transportation, ride shares, or taxis. If you are leaving campus to go home, arrange private transportation.

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- While inside your home or residence, take precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (which can begin before showing symptoms when in quarantine):
  - Separate yourself from others, especially people who are at [higher risk of serious illness](#).
  - Stay in one room and away from other people in your home as much as possible.
  - Use a separate bathroom, if available.
  - Do not prepare or serve food to others.
  - Do not allow visitors into your home.
  - Wear a cloth face covering or mask over your nose and mouth if you are in a room with others.
  - Make sure others wear a cloth face covering or mask over their nose and mouth if they need to enter the room.
  - Do not share household items such as dishes, cups, utensils, towels or bedding with other people. After using these items, wash them thoroughly with soap and water.
  - Clean and disinfect all high-touch surfaces daily (including counters, tabletops, doorknobs, faucets, toilets, phones, tv remotes, keys, keyboards), especially any surfaces that may have body fluids on them. Use household cleaning and disinfectant sprays or wipes according to product label instructions.
- For more information on tracking symptoms of COVID-19 and when to seek emergency to medical care, visit CDC's [Symptoms of Coronavirus](#).

### While on Holiday Break

While the holidays are a time when families and others gather together, you should be careful, particularly if gatherings include [individuals at higher risk](#) for severe illness (e.g., people over the age of 65 or who have underlying health conditions) and if there is an [increasing or high number of cases in the community](#). Certain types of locations and events present greater risk for the spread of COVID-19.

Higher risk settings include:

- Indoor settings, especially with poor ventilation.
- Places where people cannot socially distance.
- Settings of activities that involve increased respiratory effort (e.g., singing, yelling, laughing, or exercising vigorously).
- Places where people carry on extended face-to-face conversations.
- Settings where people remove their mask to eat or drink, and remain in one place, such as at bars and social gatherings.

If you will be attending a celebration during holiday break, follow the [NCDHHS Guidance for Private Social Gatherings](#) and [summary of guidelines](#).

### Take Precautions to Protect Your Health

- Avoid high-risk settings.
- Always practice the 3 Ws (Wear, Wait, Wash) whenever you go out.
- If you leave home, bring extra [cloth face coverings](#) (do not share or swap with others), tissues and hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol whenever possible.
- Get vaccinated for the flu if you have not already done so.

### Wear a Cloth Face Covering Over Your Nose and Mouth

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- Face coverings are required indoors when you are with individuals who you do not live with, including visiting someone else's house or when you are having guests over at your own home. Face coverings must also be worn outside if you cannot consistently maintain 6ft of distance apart from non-household members.
- Avoid singing, chanting or shouting, especially when not wearing a face covering or mask.
- Wash cloth face coverings after each use using the warmest water and highest heat dryer acceptable for the fabric.

### **Wait Six Feet Apart to Keep Social Distance and Limit Close Contact**

- Avoid close contact with people you aren't living or staying with over the holiday break.
- [Maintain a distance](#) of at least 6 feet or more from people you don't live with. Be particularly mindful in areas where it is harder to keep this distance, such as restrooms and eating areas.
- 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/or fully enclosed indoor spaces. Increase ventilation by opening windows and doors to the extent this is safe and feasible based on the weather.
- If you plan to [eat at a restaurant](#), avoid busy eating areas during high volume mealtimes.
- Avoid shaking hands or giving hugs. Instead, wave and verbally greet others.
- If you attend events or gatherings during the holiday break, limit the number of people you interact with and number of events you attend. Limit carpooling or other close contact activities to members of your household or the same small group of individuals. Make sure everyone in the small group agrees to notify each other if they experience symptoms of COVID-19.
- Check with the event host, organizer or venue for updated information about any COVID-19 safety guidelines and to ask if they [have steps in place](#) to prevent the spread of the virus.
- Download and use the [SLOWCOVIDNC](#) app, and encourage others to do the same.
- Be mindful of drinking alcohol, as this can impact your ability to practice social distancing.

### **Wash Your Hands Often**

- [Wash your hands](#) often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in a public place or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Hand sanitizer cannot be substituted for hand washing when hands are visibly soiled.

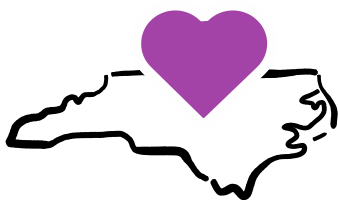
### **Limit Contact with High Touch Surfaces or Shared Items**

- Use cashless payment options when possible. Otherwise, exchange cash or card by placing payment in a receipt tray or on the counter.
- Avoid any self-serve food or drink options, such as buffets, salad bars and condiment or drink stations. Use grab-and-go meal options, if available. If buffets or self-service food options cannot be avoided, maintain 6 ft of distance from others and visit during off-peak times when possible.
- When possible, use disposable food service items including utensils and dishes.
- Use touchless garbage cans when available. Use a napkin, single use towel or other hand covering when handling trash can lids, door handles and common touch surfaces.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds immediately before eating food and after touching any common surfaces like hand railings, payment kiosks, door handles and toilets. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Do not share mobile phones or tablets.

## Returning to Campus

When traveling back to campus, follow CDC's guidance for [travel during COVID-19](#) to protect yourself and the campus community.

- It is important to practice the [3 Ws \(Wear, Wait, Wash\)](#) whenever you are traveling and around others outside of your household.
- Be aware of any policies or procedures for returning to campus put in place by your institute of higher education, such as testing or quarantine period requirements.
- Consider coordinating and staggering arrival times of roommates, suitemates and/or hallmates to avoid crowding and increase social distancing when returning to campus.



**#StayStrongNC**

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

**Learn more at [nc.gov/covid19](https://nc.gov/covid19).**



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