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Take steps during the holidays to prevent the spread of COVID-19

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. — The holidays usually are a time to spend with loved ones celebrating family traditions. As cases of COVID-19 continue at an upward trajectory in Coconino County and many locations across the country, the holidays will require extra safety precautions this year.

Gatherings with family and friends outside of your household can increase the chances of getting or spreading COVID-19 or the flu. Celebrating virtually or with members of the same household who are consistently taking measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 poses the lowest risk for spread. Travel also increases the chance of getting and spreading the coronavirus. Staying home is the best way to protect yourself and others.

If holiday plans include a gathering that brings together people from different households, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers some general considerations. Guests should be aware of these considerations and ask their host what mitigation measures will be in place during the gathering. Hosts should consider the following:

- Limit the number of attendees as much as possible to allow people from different households to remain at least 6 feet apart at all times. Guests should avoid direct contact, including handshakes and hugs, with others not from their household.
- Avoid holding gatherings in crowded, poorly ventilated spaces with persons who are not in your household. Hold outdoor gatherings if weather permits.
- Increase ventilation by opening windows and doors to the extent that is safe and feasible based on the weather, or by placing central air and heating on continuous circulation.
- Require guests to wear masks. At gatherings that include persons of different households, everyone should always wear a mask that covers both the mouth and nose, except when eating or drinking. It is also important to stay at least 6 feet away from people who are not in your household at all times.
- Encourage attendees to wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Limit contact with commonly touched surfaces or shared items, such as serving utensils.
- Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces and any shared items between use when feasible.

As a reminder, everyone should adhere to the very important safety precautions during the holidays and beyond:

- Wear face masks when in public and when around people not in your household
- Keep 6 feet apart from people not in your household
- Wash hands frequently
- Stay home when sick

More information is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html>.

Following these guidelines will help make the holiday season happy and healthy.

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