

Find your 5: Limit social gatherings to prevent the spread

COVID-19 Joint Information Center | July 29, 2020

**Preventing runaway spread of COVID-19 in Washington requires all of us to do our part.
Fewer, shorter and safer interactions are crucial.**

Social gatherings are one reason we're seeing high rates of COVID-19 activity throughout the state. The warm weather provides tempting opportunities to gather with friends and family outside your immediate household. Every time we're around others and we talk, laugh, cough or sneeze, we may be spreading the virus because we often don't have any symptoms or know we have COVID-19.

Staying home is still safest. But when we go out, fewer, shorter and safer interactions help us keep one another safe. Keep your distance, wear a face covering and wash your hands. Avoid crowds and keep your social circle small – very small.

Find your 5 people. The governor's Safe Start plan restricts social gatherings to 5 or fewer people (10 people if you're in a Phase 3 county). For any in-person gathering that involves people from separate households, keep the total number of people gathering at one time to five or fewer. Only participate in one or two social gatherings a week. Make sure everyone stays six feet apart and wears face coverings.

Limiting how many people we socialize with gives COVID-19 fewer chances to spread and more chances to contain it. If you find out you have COVID-19, public health officials can more easily make sure the people you saw recently get tested and stay home safely.

Remember outside is safer than inside. Outdoor gatherings are generally safer because of the breeze and open air. While outdoors with others, wear your face covering as much as possible, especially when less than six feet apart. If you're indoors with members outside of your household or have someone with COVID-19 isolating themselves in a room, wear your face covering at all times.

Keep it quick. Shorter in-person time is safer than longer in-person time. Health officials define "close contact" as being within six feet of someone for 15 minutes or more. More time together is more time for COVID-19 to find its way to your friend, neighbor, colleague or family member.

Don't go if you're sick! This may be your first chance to hang out with friend in a while, but it isn't your last. If you feel sick at all — even just a little — reschedule. If you have any symptoms that might be related to COVID-19, call your health care provider or local health department to get tested.

Other quick reminders about in-person gatherings*

- Avoid touching surfaces where infected droplets from people talking, laughing, coughing or sneezing may have landed. This means no communal food or drinks and don't share plates or utensils.
- Wash, wash, wash your hands. Use soap, wash for 20 seconds. Repeat frequently.
- Avoid close physical contact. Air hugs, air high fives and elbow bumps are safe ways to say hello and good-bye.
- Wear face coverings indoors at all times. When outdoors, wear face coverings whenever you're six feet apart or less.
- Practice compassion and enjoy your time together. Time with friends and family is precious and important for our physical and mental health. Protect each other during these tough times.

*Additional info in DOH blog post: [Party like it's 2020](#) – 7/2/2020

What about events like a wedding? For weddings and funerals, the Safe Start plan allows 30 people or 20% of capacity, whichever is less. Face coverings and six feet of physical distance between households is required. Receptions are prohibited. The 30 person limit applies to indoor and outdoor venues.

If you want to plan any other kind of in-person gathering, now's a good time to get creative.

- Drive-by birthday, retirement or baby shower parties let you wave hello, throw a kiss or hand off a gift in celebration of someone's special day.
- Throw a block party where everyone brings their BBQs to their front yards, streams their favorite music and enjoys a physically-distant dinner together from their own driveway.
- Apps like Zoom and FaceTime let you organize support groups, virtual book clubs, game nights, or movie watching parties.

Details about what's allowed for activities involved with religious services or business activities are on the governor's website (<https://www.governor.wa.gov/issues/issues/covid-19-resources/covid-19-reopening-guidance-businesses-and-workers>).

Additional information

Additional information and commonly asked questions about face coverings is available at www.coronavirus.wa.gov/masks and www.doh.wa.gov/masks.

You can see which phase your county is in and what's open in each phase on the Safe Start page of the state's COVID-19 website at coronavirus.wa.gov/what-you-need-know/safe-start.