

FEWER. SHORTER. SMALLER. SAFER.

A Guide to Gathering



HERE'S WHAT WE KNOW: gathering in groups—even with people we know—may spread COVID-19. The more people we interact with at a gathering and the longer that interaction lasts, the higher the risk of becoming infected.

The safest action, especially if you're in a high-risk category ([cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions)), is to avoid gatherings and find different ways to celebrate.

CELEBRATIONS DURING COVID

This year, our game days, family gatherings and holidays will be a little different. And that's hard. But there are lots of ways to be a little more together, even when we're apart.

On-screen get togethers: Sure, it won't be quite the same, but scheduling a few virtual holiday gatherings can take the sting out of being separated. Getting together online to cook, open gifts, decorate desserts, do a craft project, listen to a playlist, or read stories can create a bit of the togetherness we crave. Consider time zones when scheduling, and make sure that any people who are not tech-savvy get help beforehand so they can be included.

Giving thanks: In a year filled with challenges, it can feel good to pause and consider the things for which we are grateful, whether that be a person, pet, place or thing. Highlight these bright spots by writing them down or sending notes, texts or emails to people in your life to express why you are grateful for them.

Secret gift exchange: Assign each family or friend a name, and ask them to mail or do a no-contact delivery of a small gift they make or buy to their assigned person. Open gifts on a group video chat and try to guess who gave what to whom.

Remote potluck: Rather than getting together, you can assign dishes to friends and family and deliver them to one another's homes. Or deliver just the ingredients for a dish or meal. Then, log in to your favorite video chat app to cook or dig in.

Learn a recipe together: Pick a favorite family recipe, share an ingredient list ahead of time with friends or family, and then get together virtually to try cooking or baking.

Game night: If you thrive on competition, make your virtual gatherings about more than just conversation. Play games, or try out a virtual bake-off, talent show or a scavenger hunt where teams race to find common and not-so-common items around the house.

GATHERING SAFETY CHECKLIST

If you decide to gather, there's always a risk of spreading COVID-19 infection. Help lessen this risk through pre-planning, conversations and some trade-offs.

Before You Gather

- Have "the conversation."** Get really clear with friends and family about how you will make safety a priority when spending time together. Set some ground rules that will help everyone know what to expect.
- Review your guest list.** Are there people who may be in a high risk category or children? Think about special needs and precautions as part of your planning.
- Check your space and gather outside if possible.** Is there room to spread out, at least 6 feet (2m) from people you don't live with? If no, is there an outdoor space, like a park where you could meet? If outside, will there be restrooms people can use? If inside, be sure your space is well ventilated by opening windows. Remind guests to bring warm clothes!
- Right-size your guest list.** Limit the number of guests based on the number allowed in your county per the Safe Start plan ([coronavirus.wa.gov/what-you-need-know/safe-start/whats-open-each-phase](https://www.coronavirus.wa.gov/what-you-need-know/safe-start/whats-open-each-phase)) and the outdoor or indoor space available that allows you to be 6-feet apart.

- Do a health check.** Ask if anyone has had symptoms ([cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html)) such as cough, fever or shortness of breath, in the last 2 weeks. Ask guests to check their temperature before arriving. Anyone with a fever—or who has had other symptoms or knows they have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last 2 weeks—should stay home.
- Consider the children.** Kids have trouble playing 6 feet apart, so wearing masks and frequent hand-washing may be the safest plan of action. Remember: kids under 2 should never wear masks!
- Make a food plan.** Talk through details like how food will be shared. The safest option is to have everyone bring their own food. If sharing, separate food ahead of time into individual servings and forgo communal bowls and utensils.
- Clean, clean, clean.** If you're hosting, frequently disinfect surfaces that people may encounter during their visit.
- Consider pre-event quarantine.** Can all participants (including yourself) self-quarantine for 14 days before the gathering?
- Get tested.** If you have been around many other people or do not regularly wear a mask, get a COVID-19 test to make sure you're negative. Take into account that it can take a few days to receive test results. If you test negative, you still need to wear a mask and keep your distance from others when you socialize.

While You Gather

- Wash early and often.** Ask adults and kids to wash hands on arrival, before and after eating, and before they leave with soap for at least 20 seconds. If there is no access to a sink, provide hand sanitizer.
- Gather outdoors if at all possible.** If indoors, open windows to increase ventilation.
- Mask up.** Wear a face covering at all times when not eating. Consider having extra masks on hand if people forget.
- Separate servings.** Avoid communal food and sharing utensils, even with babies and young children. Don't share drinks.
- Avoid close contact.** Smiles and air hugs only, and prepare kids ahead of time to do the same.

After You Gather

- Wash hands (again).** Wash for 20 seconds with soap and water.
- Sanitize.** Clean all surfaces ([cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html)) that may have been touched by guests such as tabletops, counters, doorknobs and bathroom fixtures, with soap and water first, and then a disinfecting agent.
- Watch for symptoms.** Alert others at the gathering if there's a positive test among anyone in attendance. Learn more ([doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/COVID19/TestingforCOVID19](https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/COVID19/TestingforCOVID19)) about what to do if you've been exposed.

IF YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO IS STRUGGLING...

Reach out. Reassure them that you are there for them. Some ideas for how to show support while maintaining physical distance:

- Set a regular day or time for a check in call or video chat.
- Mail them a letter offering words of encouragement and love.
- Drop off a homemade treat, takeout from their favorite restaurant, or a favorite book.
- Listen without judgment.
- Reassure them that it is ok to feel sad, anxious and lonely during this time, and that this is not forever. Also remind them there is help available to them if they need it.
- If possible, arrange for both of you to get tested, then self-quarantine for two weeks. Then you can plan a long visit to help give them the support and comfort they may need this time of year.

If you are experiencing stress due to COVID-19, call the Washington Listens line at 833-681-0211 for support and resources.

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 (Washington Relay) or email civil.rights@doh.wa.gov.