



Guidance: Safer Holiday Celebrations During the COVID-19 Pandemic

November 10, 2020

The following guidance was developed by the San Francisco Department of Public Health and will be posted at <http://www.sfgdcp.org/safersocial>. This guidance may change as information is updated.

AUDIENCE: Members of the general public who celebrate holidays.

BACKGROUND: There are numerous holiday celebrations practiced by various faiths and communities. Due to the communal nature of many holiday activities, the City of San Francisco wishes to support our residents in celebrating safer holidays in order to [reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19](#) [see more at [sfgdcp.org/safersocial](http://www.sfgdcp.org/safersocial)]. This guidance will provide information on:

- Which activities are not permitted due to a high risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- How to reduce risk for safer holiday travel.
- How to have safer religious and cultural ceremonial gatherings.
- Safer alternatives to celebrate this season.
- How to host safer holiday toy, clothing, and food drives or giveaways
- Safer holiday tips for community groups

Holiday Activities Not Permitted During COVID-19 Pandemic

Do not participate in the following activities, which **are prohibited** by local or state public health orders:

- **Indoor gatherings among different households**, including holiday gatherings, celebrations, events or parties. The risk of COVID-19 is much higher indoors. See more at www.sfgdcp.org/indoorrisk
- **Outdoor gatherings that include more than 3 households or more than 25 attendees total (if no food or drink is consumed)**. This includes everyone present, including hosts and guests. Remember, the smaller number of people you gather with, the lower your risk of infection
- **Outdoor gatherings that include more than 3 households or more than 6 attendees total (if food or drinks are consumed)**. Sharing a meal with different households is higher risk, since masks cannot be worn while eating or drinking.
- **Carnivals, festivals, and block parties.**
- **Organizing or coordinating groupings of gatherings at the same time (“simultaneous gatherings”)**
- **Unauthorized street fairs or festivals such as those that might take advantage of streets that have been closed to support economic activity (such as outdoor dining, outdoor personal services, etc.)**

[Skip the Flu! Get the Flu shot.](#)

Flu vaccines are critical in the fight against COVID-19 by (1) keeping workers and communities healthy and (2) reducing strain on our healthcare and testing systems that are responding to COVID-19.

Those over the age of 6 months are strongly encouraged to get a flu shot.

Find out how to get one at www.sfgdcp.org/flu



Activities Discouraged During COVID-19 Pandemic

- Avoid singing, chanting, shouting, and playing wind/brass instruments because more respiratory droplets are formed during these activities.
- You should not travel to a holiday festival. Unnecessary travel can spread COVID-19. Festivals are higher risk because people from many households are gathered together, and maintaining 6 feet of distance at all times can be difficult.

Holiday Travel

The safest way to celebrate holidays is to **spend time with people in the same household** or to celebrate virtually. Traveling increases the chance of getting and spreading COVID-19. Staying home is the best way to protect yourself and others.

If you must travel, be informed of the risks involved. Use information from the following webpages to decide whether to travel this season:

- [San Francisco: COVID Travel Advisory](#) including when to quarantine upon return from travel or after visitors have stayed with you
- [San Francisco: Guidance on Travel During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) including tips for staying at lodging facilities
- [Association of Bay Area Health Officials: Winter Holiday Recommendations](#)
- [CDC Know Your Travel Risk](#)
- [CDC Know When to Delay Your Travel to Avoid Spreading COVID-19](#)

If you decide to travel, follow these safety measures during your trip to protect yourself and others from COVID-19:

- Wear a [mask](#) to keep your nose and mouth covered when in public places.
- Avoid close contact by [staying at least 6 feet apart](#) from anyone who is not from your household.
- [Wash your hands](#) often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol).
- Avoid contact with anyone who is sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.



Indoor Religious & Ceremonial Gatherings for Holidays

The safest way to attend religious and cultural gatherings for holidays is to **celebrate virtually**. If you do decide to attend an outdoor or indoor religious ceremony, please [assess the risks](#):

- Indoor gatherings are generally much more risky than outdoor gatherings because the COVID-19 virus can travel in the air more than 6 feet and collect indoors. See www.sfgdcp.org/indoorrisk
- Adults over 50 and those with health risks should avoid indoor settings with crowds. To learn more about who is at higher risk, and additional steps you can take to protect yourself, go to sfgdcp.org/vulnerable.
- All gatherings should be **two hours or less**. The longer the duration, the greater the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Outdoor Religious & Ceremonial Gatherings for Holidays

[Outdoors is MUCH safer](#). If you choose to attend a religious or ceremonial gathering outdoors, please be aware of the following guidelines set by the County and State:

- Outdoor gatherings for religious services or religious ceremonies must involve no more than 200 people.
- All gatherings should be **two hours or less**. The longer the duration, the greater the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Safer Holiday Activities

The safest way to celebrate holidays is to celebrate virtually or to **spend time with people in the same household**. Some specific alternatives that are **lower risk** but still capture the significance of various holidays include:

- Continuing to **observe your cultural traditions**, ensuring that you share them with your immediate household members. Be especially mindful around loved ones at higher risk for severe complications from COVID-19. To learn more about who is at higher risk, and additional steps you can take to protect yourself, go to sfgdcp.org/vulnerable.
- **Preparing traditional family recipes** with members of your household.
- Having a virtual dinner and sharing recipes with friends and family.
- **Decorating** your home inside and out with festive decorations.
- Joining a **virtual get-together celebration**.
- **Chanting or singing, or raised voices increase the spread of virus particles, especially indoors.** Consider virtually chanting or singing with others, particularly with those at higher risk for severe complications from COVID-19.
- Shopping locally with curbside pickup.
- Consider shopping online, including with local businesses, rather than in person. Consider shopping with curbside pickup or online during particularly crowded days, such as on the day after Thanksgiving or the Monday after Thanksgiving.



- Having gifts sent to family and friends directly from the retailer.
- Watching sports events, parades, and movies from home.
- Participating in Religious/Cultural ceremonies remotely.
- Sending holiday cards via mail or e-mail.
- Dropping off gifts to family or friends while continuing to physically distance (such as at the end of a driveway or at the edge of a yard). Wash hands before and after handling items (before giving, and after receiving gifts).
- Sharing food and drink items with people outside your household is not recommended to the extent possible.
 - If you must share food or drink items with people outside your household:
 - Try to use single-serve disposable containers and ensure people are not touching and sharing utensils (e.g. serving utensils)
 - Food and beverages must be prepared and served by a person who washes or sanitizes their hands frequently and wears a face covering
 - Everyone should remain masked when they are not actively eating or drinking, especially when they are talking.
 - If you are giving home-prepared food or drink gifts to drop off to others, be sure to:
 - Wear a mask and practice good hand hygiene while preparing and packaging your gift.
 - Wipe down and disinfect surfaces while preparing and packaging your gift.
 - Disinfect or wash your hands thoroughly any time you touch your face, and before and after delivery.
 - Food or drink items should only be prepared by people who can follow these steps carefully. We all want to give a gift of love and care.

Always Take Personal Protective Measures

Regardless of how you choose to celebrate a holiday season, it is important to keep the following in mind:

1. **Face Coverings:** Wear a cloth face covering that securely covers nose and mouth to prevent disease spread when outside your home and around others that are not part of your household.
2. **Practice Physical Distancing:** Stay at least 6 feet away (three or more adult steps) from all other people who are not part of your own household, especially when talking, eating, or drinking.
3. **Outdoors is much safer:** Avoid confined spaces, especially indoors.
4. **Good Hygiene:** Wash or sanitize your hands often. Clean high touch items regularly.
5. **Minimize Mixing:** Plan activities to limit mixing between different households.
 - a. Currently, **OUTDOOR social gatherings are limited to up to 3 households with no more than 25 people total.** Indoor social gatherings are not permitted.
 - b. You may gather with more than 12 people if all those individuals live with you.
6. **Stay Home If You Are Sick or You are in a High-Risk Group:** If you are sick, or you have been in contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or has symptoms of COVID-19 please [get tested](#) and stay home and away from others. [People at higher risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19](#) (such as older adults, people with chronic medical conditions) are strongly urged to stay home.



Holiday Toy, Clothing, & Food Drives Or Giveaways

If your organization is planning to host a toy, clothing, or food collection drive or giveaway to help individuals and families in need, you will need to organize your event differently in order to keep our community safe.

- All collection drives and giveaways should be hosted **outdoors**.
- Do not serve food or drinks to participants.
- If a line forms, ensure staff and attendees are 6 feet apart.
- Ensure people are wearing masks at all times.
- Discourage individuals and families from congregating after picking up their gifts. This can be done with gentle reminders to “go home and get cozy!”
- Families or individuals coming to pick up should be appointment-only, scheduling no more than 1 individual or family at a time to come and pick up their gifts or goods to avoid crowding.

For more tips on other outdoor gatherings, see in the following section, “Safer Holiday Tips for Community Groups.”

What must I do as a host business or organization?

Organizations hosting a collection drive or giveaway of **food, clothing, or other necessities of life** must complete, maintain, and implement the following documents for your event:

- COVID-19 screening for all Personnel (www.sfcdcp.org/screening-handout).
- The [SFDPH Social Distancing Protocol](https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/files/C19-07-Appendix-A.pdf) (posted at <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/files/C19-07-Appendix-A.pdf>) that includes, among other requirements, a plan to clean and disinfect high touch surfaces such as seating, doors, and others (see SFDPH cleaning/disinfection guidance, posted at www.sfcdcp.org/covidcleaning).

Organizations hosting a collection drive or giveaway of **only toys or non-essential gifts** must complete, maintain, and implement the following documents for your event:

- The relevant [Health and Safety Plan](https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/covid-guidance/2020-10-HSP-Curbside.pdf) (posted at: <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/covid-guidance/2020-10-HSP-Curbside.pdf>). The Health and Safety Plan must be available for Personnel, and posted at the physical entrance where the Host operates.
- COVID-19 screening for all Personnel (www.sfcdcp.org/screening-handout).
- The [SFDPH Social Distancing Protocol](https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/files/C19-07-Appendix-A.pdf) (posted at <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/files/C19-07-Appendix-A.pdf>) that includes, among other requirements, a plan to clean and disinfect high touch surfaces such as seating, doors, and others (see SFDPH cleaning/disinfection guidance, posted at www.sfcdcp.org/covidcleaning).



Safer Holiday Tips for Community Groups

The following information serves as a reminder to businesses, community groups, and others who are considering hosting holiday events, of what is permitted and how to make holiday celebrations safer.

- **Avoid large gatherings:** In accordance with both State and County restrictions, social gatherings are limited to **up to three households with a maximum of 25 total people (the stricter of these limits applies)**, and must remain **outdoors**. Free-form events that may lead to gatherings during holiday celebrations are discouraged because there are no mechanisms to ensure adequate social distancing, prevent mixing of households, and ensure face covering compliance. Street gatherings, events, contests, fairs, or festivals, such as those that might take place in parks or closed streets, are not permitted at this time, even if a street has been closed to support local economic activity.
- **Indoor gatherings are prohibited.** The State and County prohibit indoor social gatherings at this time because the risk of COVID-19 transmission is MUCH greater indoors. See www.sfgdcp.org/indoorkick
- **Childcare/Out of School Time Programs:** Childcare and Out of School Time programs can host holiday-themed activities while youth are in their regularly scheduled programming with their stable cohort of 14 youth and 2 adults.
- **Keep masks on:** Remind families to wear face coverings. Wearing face coverings when outside of the home keeps everyone safer.
- **Maintain social distance:** Don't use closed streets or parks to convene unauthorized gatherings, or encourage households to gather. "Just Add Music" permits should not be used to convene social gatherings.
- Find out more about **Safer Social Interactions** posted on www.sfgdcp.org/safersocial

Resources

- San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH)
 - sfgdcp.org/covid19
 - <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/covid-guidance/COVID-Travel-Advisory.pdf>
 - <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/covid-guidance/ABAHO-Winter-Holiday-Recommendations.pdf>
- City & County of San Francisco (SFGOV)
 - Guidance on safer social interactions during the pandemic sfgdcp.org/safersocial
 - Social Distancing



San Francisco Department of Public Health

Guidance

<https://sf.gov/stay-6-feet-apart-social-distancing>

- Stay Home. Save Lives
<https://sf.gov/stay-home-except-essential-needs>
- Flu Shots
<https://sf.gov/flu-shots>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
 - Holiday celebrations
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html#holiday-celebrations>
 - Hosting Gatherings or Cook-Outs
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/personal-social-activities.html#gatherings>
 - When and how to wash your hands
<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>