Tip Sheet for Safer Social Interactions During COVID-19 Pandemic
(Including After COVID-19 Vaccination)
Updated March 23, 2021

This Tip Sheet was developed by the San Francisco Department of Public Health and can be found at www.sfcdcp.org/safersocial.

Updates from the March 11, 2021 version:

• As COVID-19 transmission decreases, our economy will progressively re-open and permitted activities will expand. Please refer to the updated Business Capacity and Activities Table for “Gatherings” restrictions (www.sfcdcp.org/covid19).

• In the Orange Tier, indoor private social gatherings are no longer prohibited by the State and County but are still strongly discouraged. Such gatherings can include up to 12 individuals with no more than 3 households involved. Mask removal is not allowed.

• Although the State’s restrictions currently do not allow for any participants of indoor private social gatherings to be unmasked regardless of vaccination status, the San Francisco Department of Public Health agrees with the guidance set forth by the CDC around indoor private social gatherings: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html. Once the State allows, households mixes can include unmasked fully vaccinated individuals with:
  1) unmasked fully vaccinated individuals
  2) unmasked unvaccinated low risk individuals, or
  3) masked unvaccinated higher risk members of a single household who are physically distanced.

• Continue to check back at www.sfcdcp.org/lifeaftervaccine for when this will be allowed.

The San Francisco Department of Public Health cares about you and we want you to take care of yourself, your family, and your community with regard to COVID-19.

The best way to reduce the risk of getting or spreading the disease is to STAY HOME. At the same time, avoiding social isolation and supporting physical and mental health during a prolonged pandemic are also important for your health. By taking care to protect ourselves, and our loved ones, and by making strategic choices now, we help our community survive and thrive, together.

When COVID-19 transmission and case rates decrease, San Francisco is able to lift restrictions on activities. Be sure to check the table at www.sfcdcp.org/covid19 to see what activities are allowed at any given time.

This tip sheet gives you information and resources to help you stay safe while also supporting your mental and physical well-being.
Assess Risk and Benefit

Before having social interactions, assess the risks and benefits.

Your risk and the risk of those close to you
Think about yourself, those in your household, and those you work with. Is anyone over age 50 or have chronic medical conditions AND unvaccinated? See sfcdcp.org/vulnerable

The risk of who you are about to see
Take the most precautions possible for those who are over age 50 or have chronic medical conditions AND unvaccinated. See sfcdcp.org/vulnerable

The benefit of the interaction
How much does the social event mean to you? Can it be replaced with a virtual visit or call? Can you minimize the amount of time you’re there?

How much COVID-19 is in the community?
Are cases decreasing, stable, or increasing? San Francisco COVID-19 Data Tracker, data.sfgov.org

If you have a higher risk of serious complications from COVID-19 and are unvaccinated, there are additional steps you may wish to take, including wearing more effective masks, considering eye protection, and considering wearing a mask while at home with other people you live with. For more information, see sfcdcp.org/vulnerable.

Risk of social interactions with people outside your household:

Any of the below informal, social interactions are subject to the “Gatherings” restrictions. Although they may or may not be permitted, all interactions during a pandemic carry risk. See the table at www.sfcdcp.org/covid19 to view current “Gatherings” restrictions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outdoors, staying 6 feet apart with face coverings on at all times.</th>
<th>Outdoor, within 6 feet and/or with face covering off.</th>
<th>Indoor staying 6 feet apart with face covering on.</th>
<th>Indoor, within 6 feet and/or with face covering off.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ENCOURAGED if you must interact with people outside of your household</strong></td>
<td>DISCOURAGED</td>
<td>DISCOURAGED</td>
<td>STRONGLY DISCOURAGED</td>
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Lower risk

Higher risk
Tips for Safer Interactions

BEFORE Your Interaction - Planning For a Safer Interaction:

- **Keep your social circles small and stable.** The smaller the group and the fewer the households you are exposed to, the safer for all.
- Remember that **outdoors is MUCH safer than indoors.**
- **Keep your interaction short.** Shorter is safer.
- Consider how you will get to and from the activity. Walking, biking, or driving in a single car would minimize your exposure to others. If using public transit, maintain as much distance as possible, with a goal of 6 feet of distance from others to the extent possible, and keep your face covering on. See more at [www.sfcdcp.org/safertransit](http://www.sfcdcp.org/safertransit)
- **If you are feeling unwell or sick, stay home and get tested for COVID-19.** See more under the Section “What To Do If You Feel Ill”

DURING Your Interaction:

- **Wear face coverings** at all times when around people you don’t live with, especially if you are in an indoor setting or if you must be around others and they are within 6 feet of you.
  - Sharing a meal with different households is a **higher risk activity**, since masks cannot be worn while eating. If you must share a meal with others, outdoors is much safer than indoors.
- **Keep 6 feet of distance.** The COVID-19 virus collects indoors and can spread even farther than 6 feet of distance.
- **Do not share items** including food, drinks, or utensils to the extent possible. Bring wipes to disinfect anything that might be shared.
- **Avoid sharing toys, bats, or balls** or any objects that are passed back and forth to the extent possible. If unavoidable, use disinfection wipes, and wipe objects down between uses.
- **Wash your hands** or use hand sanitizer especially after touching shared objects and before touching your face.
- Raised voices, such as when shouting and singing, should be avoided. Studies have shown that projecting your voice like when singing or shouting can spread more virus.

AFTER Your Interaction:

- Wash your hands with soap and water upon returning home.
- Try to remember who you interact with especially when you have higher risk exposures. Higher risk exposures are those where you were within 6 feet of someone outside your household for more than 15 minutes altogether (even if spread out in only a few minutes at a time over 24 hours) or when either of your faces were not covered. Kissing, or sharing utensils are also close contact activities. To know more details, see [sfcdcp.org/closecontact](http://sfcdcp.org/closecontact). Remembering who might have been a close contact can help trace the spread of infection if you or someone you interact with gets COVID-19. To the
extent possible, keep the number of people you have higher risk exposures to small and stable.

Other Considerations:

- Street closures intended to revitalize economic activity (e.g., outdoor dining and outdoor personal services) should not turn into unauthorized street festivals, or freeform gatherings of people that pose substantial problems with compliance, enforcement, and accountability.

- Organizing or coordinating groupings of gatherings at indoor or outdoor spaces at the same time is also prohibited (“simultaneous gatherings”) unless they meet specific criteria and have specific mitigation measures in place (see https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/covid-guidance/Gatherings-Tips.pdf).

What To Do If You Feel Ill

Cover your face, test early, and trace!

If you have any one of the following symptoms that is new and not otherwise explained, get tested for COVID-19.

- Fever, Chills, or Repeated Shaking/Shivering
- Cough
- Sore Throat
- Shortness of Breath, Difficulty Breathing
- Feeling Unusually Weak or Fatigued
- New Loss of Taste or Smell
- Muscle Pain
- Headache
- Runny or Congested Nose
- Nausea or Vomiting
- Diarrhea

To get tested:

- Contact your healthcare provider (they are required by San Francisco Health Order to test you if you have any of the symptoms above); or
- If you are uninsured, sign up for free testing at CityTestSF sf.gov/citytests; or
- If you live outside of San Francisco, you can check with the county where you live for other testing options.
- Remember that a negative test result only says that the COVID-19 virus was not found in that specimen at that time. If you are often exposed to people outside your household, such as through your job, you should consider testing on a regular basis.

Stay home and away from others while awaiting your results. See Home Isolation and Quarantine Instructions at www.sfcdp.org/i&q to find out what to do next.

Contact Tracing and CA Notify

CA Notify – another way for us to stop the spread

CA Notify (canotify.ca.gov) is an app you can add on your smartphone. It uses Bluetooth technology to recognize when you and your phone have been in close proximity to others infected with COVID-19 to help stop the spread of the virus in our community.
If you are using CA Notify and you test positive, your diagnosis will not be shared with others. However, if other people were in close contact with you and are also enrolled in the app, they will be told they had an exposure. They will be told the date of the exposure, not the time, location, or identity.

If you are using CA Notify and you were exposed to someone who tested positive and they entered their result into the app, you will be told the date of the exposure, but not the time, location or identity.

CA Notify is available through Apple and Google. See canotify.ca.gov for more information. See canotify.ca.gov for more information and learn more about contact tracing at covid19.ca.gov/contact-tracing/

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**Safer Social Interactions After You Are Fully Vaccinated**

Studies show that people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are strongly protected from getting severely ill, hospitalized, or dying. Vaccinated people may still be able to transmit the virus to others they interact with, including those they live with, who may or may not be vaccinated. Limited data so far suggest the vaccines will at least partly reduce transmission. Studies are underway and more data are likely to be available in the coming months.

If you are fully vaccinated (i.e., 14 days have passed since your final shot), consider the following when deciding on activities you may wish to do:

- You can feel safer about your own health when participating in activities permitted by our state and local health departments (see [www.sfcdcp.org/covid19](http://www.sfcdcp.org/covid19)). As the pandemic improves, more activities will be open.
  - Please consider, though, whether those you interact closely with, including those you live with, are at higher risk of severe COVID-19 illness if you were to transmit the virus to them (to learn more about who is at higher risk of severe disease, see [www.sfcdcp.org/vulnerable](http://www.sfcdcp.org/vulnerable)).
  - Consider whether the people you live with or interact closely with are fully vaccinated.

- When taking part in activities that involve people outside your household, also consider:
  - Are all the people around you vaccinated?
  - What are the risks to the people involved who are not vaccinated? Are they at higher risk for severe illness?
  - What are the risks to people connected to those you are interacting with? If a person got infected during your interaction, do they live with an unvaccinated vulnerable person?
  - You may not know the answers to these questions. Therefore, consider whether the activity can be done more safely, taking such steps as moving the activity outdoors, involving fewer people, keeping 6 or more feet apart, and wearing masks consistently.

- When in public, you may not know who all has been fully vaccinated, or who is at higher risk to become very sick. Therefore, for now, continue all recommended precautions when out in public. That is, after getting the COVID-19 vaccine, you should still:
  - Wear a well-fitting mask that covers your nose and mouth when around others
  - Stay at least 6 feet away from others
  - Avoid crowds
  - Avoid poorly ventilated spaces
  - Wash your hands, especially after touching shared objects or after touching your face

If you are a “Close Contact” to someone with COVID-19 and are fully vaccinated, read more of what to do at [www.sfcdcp.org/quarantineaftervaccination](http://www.sfcdcp.org/quarantineaftervaccination).
We still have more to learn about how COVID-19 vaccines work in real-world conditions. Recommendations will change as we learn more about the protection that vaccines provide against infections without symptoms and against different strains of the virus. Stay informed of the latest information at the CDC at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html and at the San Francisco Department of Public Health at www.sfcdcp.org/covid19.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Does the SFDPH say we can leave our homes and have social interactions?**
*Please refer to the Business Capacity and Activities Table for “Gatherings” restrictions at www.sfcdcp.org/covid19.* Connecting with others is good for your health and very important as we try to stay resilient and care for each other. You may want to plan a safer social interaction with few people, outdoors, maintaining six feet of distance, and wearing masks, to help your mental health and reduce social isolation. Follow the tips above on how to have safer social interactions.

**Are we allowed to meet in our local park for a picnic and toss a Frisbee or football?**
*Please refer to the Business Capacity and Activities Table for “Gatherings” restrictions at www.sfcdcp.org/covid19.* At this time, this is allowed but check for updates as case rates change. Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer before and after touching shared objects and follow the tips above about safer social interactions.

**My young children are going crazy and they need to have a playdate. How can we do one safely?** Although most children get no or mild symptoms when they have COVID-19, some children are at higher risk. For some families, children with health conditions or disabilities may be feeling an intense need for social interactions. Keep in mind if your child attends a childcare, school, or Out of School Time program, any exposures they have outside these programs could put the other children they interact with in the program at risk. Outdoor playdates where children over the age of 2 keep their face coverings on are safest. Avoid sharing food. To the extent possible, try not to share toys. To the extent possible, keep the number of people small. If you do meet outdoors, sanitize hands before they play. After play, wipe down toys and sanitize hands before returning home. If you are feeling overwhelmed, reach out to others and let them know. The San Francisco Human Services Agency has a 24-hour crisis line for parents, the TALK Line, at (415) 441-5437. Learn more about resources at [https://www.sfhsa.org](https://www.sfhsa.org).
I need to check on a grandparent and my young child won’t/can’t wear a mask. What can we do to have a safe visit?
Sheltering in place is very important for people in high risk groups, such as older adults and those with chronic medical conditions (www.sfcdcp.org/vulnerable). Isolation is also a serious issue for older adults. Consider all the different ways that you can check on someone safely first, such as more frequent phone calls or, if possible, virtual visits. If you feel like a wellness check or social visit is necessary, be particularly mindful of the safety tips above, including information about interactions after COVID-19 vaccination. Limit as much as possible the number of people you interact with to limit your potential of inadvertently exposing the grandparent to COVID-19.

Can I host a socially distant birthday party outdoors?
Please refer to the Business Capacity and Activities Table for “Gatherings” restrictions at www.sfcdcp.org/covid19. Keep in mind when groups get together, the risks to everyone in the group goes up, as well as all the people that they work with and come in contact with. Keep this in mind when planning occasions and follow the tips above on how to have safer social interactions.

Can I have a dinner party with friends at my house or in my backyard?
Please refer to the Business Capacity and Activities Table for “Gatherings” restrictions at www.sfcdcp.org/covid19. Informal social gatherings indoors with people outside of your household are not permitted under the current Health Order. Indoors is much higher risk that outdoors, and dining is higher risk, since people cannot wear a mask while eating and drinking.

Someone I met up with tested positive for COVID-19. We haven’t touched and have only met outdoors, what is the risk and what should I do next?
We are learning more about COVID-19 as time passes. At the current time, there is the least risk to outdoor, no-contact interactions where people are six feet apart at all times with their faces covered, and no food or objects are shared. If you think you spent more than 15 minutes altogether – even if it was only a minute or so each time - within 6 feet of that person, then you should quarantine. See www.sfcdp.org/i&q for instructions on how to quarantine. If you develop any symptoms of illness, call your healthcare provider, get tested and isolate according to the instructions at www.sfcdp.org/i&q. If you have been fully vaccinated for COVID-19, read more at www.sfcdp.org/quarantineaftervaccination.

What if I’m feeling a bit sick-ish but I’m not sure if it is really something or not - is it still okay to meet up outdoors with a friend or two?
If you feel at all unwell, stay home, for yourself and others. See “What To Do If You Feel Ill” above. Call your healthcare provider and get tested. Staying home when you might be sick saves lives.

Resources
Useful COVID-19 resources to keep checking:

- San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) COVID-19 Guidance: www.sfcdcp.org/covid19
- City and County of San Francisco COVID-19 Information: sf.gov/coronavirus
- California Connected – Contact Tracing: https://covid19.ca.gov/contact-tracing/