



Guidance: Safer Holiday Celebrations During the COVID-19 Pandemic

January 6, 2021

The following guidance was developed by the San Francisco Department of Public Health and will be posted at <http://www.sfgdcp.org/Covid-19> under [Safer Holidays](#). This guidance may change as information is updated.

Summary of Updates since the 12/14/20 Version

- Incorporates updates to align with current gatherings allowances: no more than 2 people from different households outdoors. If away from home, no more than 12 people from the same household may gather outdoors.

AUDIENCE: Members of the general public who celebrate holidays.

BACKGROUND: Individuals, families of various faiths and communities have long-standing and honored traditions for different holidays. Due to the communal nature of many holiday activities, the City of San Francisco wants to support residents in celebrating safer holidays in order to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 [see more at sfgdcp.org/safersocial]. This guidance provides 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 the holidays and other special occasions
- How to host safer 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](#).
- **Outdoor gatherings with no more than 2 people from different households. If away from home, no more than 12 people from the same household may gather outdoors.** Remember: The smaller the gathering, the lower your risk of infection.
- **Unauthorized street fairs, carnivals, festivals, or block parties.** You can recognize authorized events by looking for postings of permits and Health & Safety Plans. Even for authorized events, social distancing and mask wearing rules apply.
- **Mixing between gatherings.** If there are several gatherings happening at once in an area, moving from group to group greatly increases the risk of infection.

[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 holiday or annual festivals. 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:

- [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
- [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

Currently, indoor religious and ceremonial gatherings are [suspended](#).

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 risk](#)

- Indoor gatherings are generally much riskier than outdoor gatherings because the COVID-19 virus can travel in the air more than 6 feet and collects indoors. See sfcdp.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 sfcdp.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 sfcdcp.org/vulnerable.
- Preparing traditional family recipes with members of your household.
- Having a virtual dinner and sharing recipes with friends and family.
- **Decorating** with festive decorations.
- Having activities such as scavenger hunts, haunted houses, dance parties in your home with members of your household.
- Joining virtual get-together celebrations such as baking or cooking, pumpkin carving, costume contests.
- **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 holiday-shopping days.
- Having gifts sent to family and friends directly from the retailer.
- Watching sports events, musical performances, plays, 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 are meeting to do so in person, remember **no more than 2 people from different households are allowed to gather**.
 - If you must share food or drink items with a person outside your household:
 - Stay outdoors. Maintain social distancing of 6 feet.



- 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.
- Both people should remain masked while not actively eating or drinking, especially while 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:** Strictly limit mixing between different households.
 - a. Indoor social gatherings are **not permitted**.
 - b. Currently, OUTDOOR social gatherings are limited to up to 2 people from different households. If from the same household, no more than 12 people total.
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 Attractions: Photo events

If you are considering photo opportunities such as visiting Santa or the Easter Bunny in a setting like a mall or smaller setting, please consider the following:

- Face coverings over the mouth and nose are required for everyone 2 years of age or older, including the staff. If a child is unable to properly wear a face covering over the nose and mouth, the child should not participate in this activity.
 - Although it may be tempting to remove face coverings when taking a photo,, face coverings **must stay on at all times**.
- Remain at least six feet apart from other visitors and staff.
- Plan for your visit; call ahead or make an appointment online to avoid crowding at the site.
- Arrive for your scheduled appointment, and exit the area after your allotted visiting time; avoid



unnecessary lingering.

- When deciding whether to attend a photo session indoors, consider the [risk of being indoors](#) or in enclosed spaces during the COVID-19 Pandemic

What must I do as a business or organization that is hosting the event?

If you are considering having photo opportunities at your business or organization during the holidays

- Photos should be hosted **outdoors** to the extent possible.
 - If hosted indoors, settings must follow relevant indoor [ventilation recommendations](#).
- All staff, must complete a [Personnel Health Screening](#) on a daily basis (www.sfdcp.org/screening-handout).
- Businesses must complete and post a [Social Distancing Protocol](#) (posted at <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/files/C19-07-Appendix-A.pdf>) and refer to [Appendix C-1\(4\) of the SIP Health Order](#) for conditions to operate.
- A plexiglass barrier **must** be present as a physical barrier between the staff and visitors, for both indoor and outdoor settings. Physically-distanced space of at least 6 feet without a plexiglass barrier present is not allowed.
- Limit **the photo area to only necessary individuals**; this includes: 1. The visitor, 2. Necessary staff (i.e. Santa), 3. The photographer. Ensure physical distancing between households.
- Photos should be scheduled by **appointment only**, to minimize crowding.
- Routinely [clean and disinfect](#) all frequently touched surfaces between visitors

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 “Safer Holiday Tips for Community Groups” below.

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.sfdcp.org/screening-handout).
- The [SFDPH Social Distancing Protocol](#) (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.sfdcp.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.sfdcp.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.sfdcp.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 **no more than 2 people from different households**. If from the same household, **no more than 12 people total**, 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 sfdcp.org/indoorrisk
- **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.sfdcp.org/safersocial

Resources

- San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH)
 - sfdcp.org/covid19
 - <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/covid-guidance/COVID-Travel-Advisory.pdf>
- City & County of San Francisco (SFGOV)
 - [Guidance on safer social interactions during the pandemic](#)



- <https://sf.gov/information/guidance-safer-social-interactions-during-pandemic>
Social Distancing
<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>