



Needham Public Health Division

Health Matters Article – Holiday Meal Safety Measures During the Pandemic

Submitted by the Needham Public Health Division

This holiday season looks a little different this year. As we look forward to celebrating with family and friends, extra considerations must be considered to keep you and your loved ones safe from COVID-19. Planning a virtual gathering poses the lowest risk for transmission of the virus. For those planning in-person gatherings, there are some before, during, and after celebration tips for both hosts and attendees. These considerations are not exhaustive, and you are encouraged to visit the CDC website and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health website for more details.

Before

1. Limit the number of attendees and check the COVID-19 risk levels of your guests' communities and your own. The state has limited gatherings at private residences to 10 people indoors and 25 outdoors. Massachusetts Department of Public Health provides information regarding gathering limits and community risk levels. See link to COVID-19 Community-Level Data Map: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/community-level-covid-19-data-reporting>.
2. Host outdoor activities when possible. If not possible, increase ventilation by opening windows and doors, and limit the number of guests. Maintain distance from one another of at least 6 feet.
3. Encourage your attendees to follow COVID-19 protocols before the event. This should include asking your guests to avoid contact with people outside their households for 14 days prior to your gathering outside of essential activities.

During

1. Limit close contact. Maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from people outside your household. This includes in restrooms and eating areas. Space out seating while dining. Encourage households to sit together. Do not hug, shake hands, or participate in close contact gestures.
2. Wear a face covering and wash your hands frequently. Provide an area to wash hands and hand sanitizer.
3. Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces and shared items. Encourage single-use options of shareable items like food containers, plates and utensils, and condiments. Avoid self-serve food and drink options. Do not share food or drink.
4. Per Governor Baker's new orders, all gatherings must end by 9:30 pm.

After

1. Stay at home for 14 days after the event to decrease possible transmission of COVID-19.
2. Consider getting tested for COVID-19, if staying home is not an option.

Remember all family and friends entering Massachusetts, including returning residents, who do not meet an exemption, are required to:

1. Completed a MA Travel form prior to arrival, unless coming from a lower-risk state.
2. Quarantine for 14 days or produce a negative COVID-19 test within 72-hours prior to arrival in MA

Be sure to follow these important COVID-19 protocols to have a safe and healthy holiday season!

For more information on COVID-19 holiday safety, the Centers of Disease Control offers more information on its website at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html>. For more information on Massachusetts Department of Public Health specific guidance, please check out the following: <https://www.mass.gov/news/thanksgiving-during-covid-19>.

For the latest updates and information on COVID-19 from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, please refer to the following website - <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-updates-and-information>. Additional information can be found on the Town of Needham website here - <https://www.needhamma.gov/4851/COVID---19>. Information can also be provided by the Needham Public Health Division, for additional questions please email: publichealthnursing@needhamma.gov.