CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
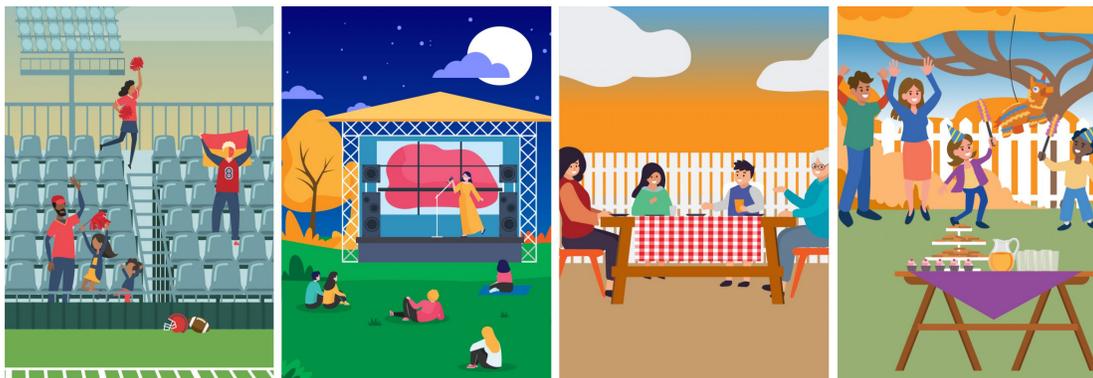CDC 24/7: Saving Lives, Protecting People™

COVID-19

Small and Large Gatherings

Updated Dec. 10, 2021

Small gatherings are informal and may occur with family and friends you regularly socialize with, often at someone's residence. They typically do not involve long distance travel. Small gathering guidance might be more appropriate for social gatherings that are more intimate with close friends and family, such as small holiday parties, family dinners, and special celebrations.

Large gatherings bring together many people from multiple households in a private or public space. Large gatherings are often planned events with a large number of guests and invitations. They sometimes involve lodging, event staff, security, tickets, and long-distance travel. Large events might be events such as conferences, trade shows, sporting events, festivals, concerts, or large weddings and parties.

Steps Everyone Can Take to Make Gatherings Safer

If you are attending a gathering, think about the steps you need to take to protect yourself and your loved ones from COVID-19.

- If you are not fully vaccinated and aged 2 or older, you should wear a mask in indoor public places.
- In general, you do not need to wear a mask in outdoor settings.
  - In areas with high numbers of COVID-19 cases, consider wearing a mask in crowded outdoor settings and for activities with close contact with others who are not fully vaccinated.
- People who have a condition or are taking medications that weaken their immune system may not be fully protected even if they are fully vaccinated. They should continue to take all precautions recommended for unvaccinated people, including wearing a well-fitted mask, until advised otherwise by their healthcare provider.
- If you are fully vaccinated, to maximize protection and prevent possibly spreading COVID-19 to others, wear a mask indoors in public if you are in an area of substantial or high transmission.
- If you are fully vaccinated, see When You've Been Fully Vaccinated.
- Testing can give you information about your risk of spreading COVID-19.
  - Consider using a self-test before joining indoor gatherings with others who are not in your household.
  - A positive self-test result means that you have an infection and should avoid indoor gatherings to reduce the risk of spreading disease to someone else.
  - A negative self-test result means that you may not have an infection. Repeating the test with at least 24 hours between tests will increase the confidence that you are not infected.
  - Ask your healthcare provider if you need help interpreting your test results.

Know how to protect your family if you have members who are vaccinated and unvaccinated.

Safer Gatherings

Gathering virtually or with the people you live with is the safest choice.

- Have a virtual gathering, like a virtual party, concert or sporting event with friends and family.
- If you do gather with people who don't live with you, gatherings and activities held outdoors are safer than indoor gatherings.
- Avoid crowded, poorly ventilated spaces.
- Know what to do if your family has members or are vaccinated and unvaccinated.

Know public safety measures in place at the venue.

- Check with the organizer or event venue for updated information about any COVID-19 safety guidelines.
- Choose events that take place outside with enough space for attendees to stay at least 6 feet apart.

What to do if You Become Sick after Attending a Gathering

Attending a large gathering or event increases your chance of being in close contact with people outside your household and being exposed to COVID-19.

- People who have come into close contact with someone with COVID-19 should be tested to check for infection:
    - Fully vaccinated people should be tested 5–7 days after their last exposure.
    - People who are not fully vaccinated should get tested immediately when they find out they are a close contact. If their test result is negative, they should get tested again 5–7 days after their last exposure or immediately if symptoms develop.
    - Know when to quarantine.

Last Updated Dec. 10, 2021
Content source: National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), Division of Viral Diseases