

# COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Festive Gatherings

## Guidance for Staying Safe During Festive Gatherings, Events and Parades

October 26, 2021

Version 5.0

### Key Points

- Public Health guidance is subject to change based on evolving local epidemiological data.
- Social gatherings with close contact in indoor settings (including shared meals) where face coverings are removed, larger public events or ceremonies and travel may increase the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- Virtual gatherings are the safest way to visit with people outside of your household, especially if people in the group are unvaccinated or immunocompromised.
- Both participants and organizers of festive gatherings are responsible for gathering limits and restrictions outlined for [Step 3 of the Roadmap to Reopen](#).

This document reflects the current Ministry of Health guidance to protect Ontarians from COVID-19 illness. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, this document is subject to change. Please visit the Southwestern Public Health website [www.swpublichealth.ca](http://www.swpublichealth.ca) regularly for updates and additional information.

### General Advice on Close Contact, and Gatherings and Events

- Virtual gatherings or events are the safest way to celebrate, especially if people in the group are unvaccinated or if their vaccination status is unknown.
- Gatherings or events held outdoors are safer than indoor gatherings.
- The fewer people who gather, the lower the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- Both participants and organizers of events are responsible for adhering to social gathering and organized public event restrictions and ensuring public health advice and measures are followed.
- COVID-19 vaccines are safe, effective, and the best way to help protect yourself, your loved ones, and your community from the spread of COVID-19.
- Stay home if you have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 even if they are mild.
- [Wash your hands](#) thoroughly and regularly and cover your cough.

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- **Get tested** if you have symptoms compatible with COVID-19, or if you've been identified as a high-risk close contact of a known COVID-19 case by Public Health.

## Attending or Organizing an Event

- If you hold a social gathering or organized public event, you must adhere to the measures and restrictions outlined in **O. Reg 364/20: Rules for Areas at Step 3 and at the Roadmap Exit Step**.
  - Social gatherings or organized public events are limited to no more than 25 people indoors or 100 people outdoors.
  - **Different capacity limits are in place** for events held at meeting or event spaces (such as banquet halls, conference or community centres).
- If you choose to hold or participate in an in-person gathering or event with people from outside your household, take precautions to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission:

Location	Vaccination Status	Public Health Measures
Outdoors	Group of fully vaccinated individuals	No face covering or physical distancing is necessary.
	People from multiple households who are unvaccinated, partially vaccinated or vaccination status is unknown	Wear a face covering if physical distancing from others outside your household cannot be maintained.
Indoors	Group of fully vaccinated individuals	You may consider removing your face covering if everyone is comfortable.
	People from multiple households who are unvaccinated, partially vaccinated or vaccination status is unknown	You should wear a face covering and physically distance as much as possible.
Meeting or event space	Face coverings and physical distancing from individuals outside your household are required, regardless of vaccination status. Proof of vaccination is required for indoor areas and outdoor areas that have a usual capacity of 20,000 or more with limited exceptions.	

- Regardless of the setting, you can wear a face covering and physically distance if you feel it is right for you, especially if you or others are immunocompromised or at high-risk of severe disease and/or exposure to COVID-19.

# COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Festive Gatherings

## Hosting a gathering, including Thanksgiving dinner, for Diwali, etc.

- You may have a gathering with people you don't live with. However, it is important to remember that knowing someone does not reduce the risk of transmitting COVID-19. Keep following good public health practices.
- Do not exceed the gathering limit of 25 people indoors and 100 people outdoors.
  - You should have the fewest number of people possible at your party or gathering and use outdoor spaces whenever possible.
  - Different capacity limits are in place for events held at meeting or event spaces.
- Open windows if possible to improve ventilation.
- Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces and provide hand sanitizer or access to a handwashing sink with soap and water.
- Ask guests not to attend if they have any symptoms, even if they are mild.
- Make a list of guests attending in case public health needs it for contact tracing.
- Remind people of public health guidance to follow during the event.
- If you choose to serve food or drinks at your party, you should:
  - Wash your hands before and frequently during food preparation and serving
  - Have everyone wash their hands before and after eating
- If you choose to attend an in-person gathering:
  - You should not attend if you have any symptoms, even if they are mild.
  - Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer regularly throughout the event.
  - Consider participating virtually or not attending the event if you are immunocompromised or at higher risk of severe disease and/or exposure to COVID-19.

## Celebrating Hallowe'en

### If you choose to trick-or-treat door-to-door:

- Stay home if you have symptoms, even if they are mild.
- Trick-or-treat outdoors as much as possible.
  - If trick-or-treating indoors, maintain physical distancing as much as possible and wear a face covering, especially when physical distancing is a challenge.
- Be creative and build the face covering into your costume.
  - A costume mask is not a substitute for a face covering.
  - A costume mask should not be worn over a non-medical mask or face covering because it can be dangerous if the costume mask makes it hard to breathe.
- Do not crowd doorsteps – take turns one at a time.

# COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Festive Gatherings

- Do not sing or shout for your treats.
- Keep interactions brief with those giving out treats.
- Use hand sanitizer often, especially before and after handling your face covering, after touching frequently touched surfaces, when you arrive home from trick-or-treating, and before and after handling or eating treats.
  - There is no need to clean or disinfect pre-packaged treats.

## **If you choose to give out treats:**

- Do not participate in Halloween festivities if you have symptoms, even if they are mild.
- Keep interactions with trick-or-treaters short and encourage them to move along after receiving their treat from you. Encourage physical distancing if a line forms.
- Consider wearing a face covering when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
  - If you are dressing up, consider including the face covering as part of your costume.
- Give out only purchased and pre-packaged treats.
- Do not ask trick-or-treaters to sing or shout for their treats.
- Clean your hands often throughout the evening using soap and water or with hand sanitizer.

## **Recognizing Remembrance Day**

- If attending a Remembrance Day memorial event:
  - Stay home if you have symptoms, even if they are mild.
  - Wear a face covering indoors and wear one outdoors if physical distancing cannot be maintained or it is required.
  - Wash your hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer frequently.
  - Consider participating virtually or not attending the event if you are immunocompromised or at higher risk of severe disease and/or exposure to COVID-19.
- If you chose to sell poppies in-person:
  - Wear a face covering.
  - Have hand sanitizer and use it regularly.
  - Consider not selling if you are immunocompromised or at higher risk for severe disease and/or exposure to COVID-19.
- If you are singing, wear a face covering indoors and outdoors if physical distancing cannot be maintained.

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## Parades

- If organizing a parade:
  - Capacity limits may not apply to parades held on a street as sidewalks are necessary for public use and access should not be restricted. Recommend discussing capacity limits with the local municipality.
    - Physical distancing between attendees of different households should be encouraged.
    - Recommend wearing a face covering if physical distancing cannot be maintained from others outside your household.
  - Capacity limits apply to parades held at event venues or the grounds of a fair/festival.
    - See [Step 3 of the Roadmap to Reopen](#) for more information on requirements for events venues, fairs and festivals.
  - Physical distancing of at least 2 metres should be maintained between parade staff/volunteers and attendees.
- If attending a parade:
  - Stay home if you have symptoms, even if they are mild.
  - Wear a face covering indoors and wear one outdoors if physical distancing cannot be maintained or it is required.
  - Wash your hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer frequently.
  - Consider participating virtually or not attending the event if you are immunocompromised or at higher risk of severe disease and/or exposure to COVID-19.

## Additional Resources

- [Ontario Public Health Measures](#)
- [Ontario Regulation 364/20: Rules for Step 3](#)
- [Ministry of Health Proof of Vaccination Questions and Answers](#)