

Holiday Planning during COVID-19



This year, we need to celebrate holidays differently to keep our family, friends, neighbours and community safer from COVID-19. It's important to remember that people are contagious before they show symptoms, and so we need to continue keeping our distance from each other as much as we can.

We can show kindness to others by limiting contact with people we don't live with and staying home as much as possible. There are many ways for us to safely show our holiday spirit and make this season memorable.

Toronto is in the **Grey - Lockdown level of the provincial government's [COVID-19 Response Framework](#)** through December 21st, 2020. Follow these public health measures to reduce COVID-19 spread:

- Get tested if you have ANY symptoms of COVID-19, even if they are mild, and self-isolate. Testing does not replace the need to follow public health measures, including limiting visits with others. Learn more about [who should get tested](#).
- Don't gather with people you don't live with. Right now, in-person gathering and close contact is best only with people you live with every day.
- Don't host or attend in-person gatherings in your home, at a friend's, or at workplaces.
- If you live alone, consider having close contact with one other household.
- Continue working remotely, if you can.
- Limit essential trips and support local stores by shopping online or for curbside pickup.
- Keep a distance of 6 feet/2 metres from people you don't live with.
- Wear a mask indoors, and outdoors when you can't keep your distance.
- Continue to connect virtually with others for support.

Many of us are good at keeping our distance from strangers, but it's really easy to let family and friends get closer. Because people are contagious before they show symptoms keeping our distance is the most important step to protect ourselves and everyone else.

1. Limit non-essential trips

a) Holiday travel



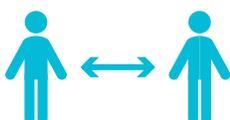
- Avoid holiday travel for family gatherings, even within Ontario.
- Host virtual events so everyone can be included.
- For students and family members returning home for the holidays, consider reducing close contact with others for 14 days before returning home.
- International students returning home will need to self-isolate for 14 days upon their return to Canada.

b) Shopping for food, decorations and presents



- Stay home if you're feeling unwell.
- Shop early to avoid shipping delays or crowds.
- Support local business by shopping online with curbside pickup or delivery.
- If you go out, plan ahead with a list and shop during non-peak hours.
- Before going out for essentials, **remember your W's:**

Watch your distance

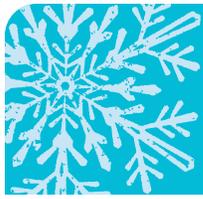


Wear a mask



Wash hands often





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c) Exchanging gifts

- Wash hands before and after handling or opening gifts to prevent the spread of germs.
- Have gifts delivered or drop them off outside the front door, keeping 6 feet/2 metres apart.
- If exchanging gifts outdoors, stand 6 feet/2 metres apart and wear a mask.



2. Keep gatherings to the people you live with

- Staying home is the best way to protect yourself and your family.
- Talk with your family and let them know it is okay to skip family gatherings this year.
- Do not visit other households or accept visitors into your home.
- Do not have play dates or sleepovers for your kids.
- Do not have in-person holiday gatherings and events at work. Consider virtual events to celebrate the holidays with co-workers.



3. Connect virtually with people you don't live with

- Connect virtually with your family and friends for celebrations.
- Share photos, favourite recipes, cooking tips and decorations by text, e-mail or on social media.
- Host a virtual meal and open gifts with extended family.



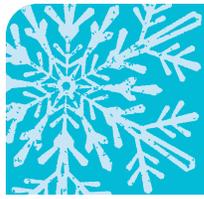
4. Making events memorable

- Think of fun activities your family can do each day to keep holiday spirits up.
 - Decorate the outside of your home or sip hot chocolate at a local park.
 - Dress up with your household and take selfies.
 - Go for a walk around your neighbourhood with your household members to look at holiday lights.
- Share your activities and ideas online with friends and family.
- Write letters and cards to family, friends or essential workers.
- Drop off arts and crafts to a neighbour to brighten their spirits.
- Consider ways you can assist vulnerable neighbours or loved ones, such as arranging delivery of essential supplies.



5. Accessing religious services, rites or ceremonies

- If going to celebrations or services at a place of worship is usually part of your tradition, check if they will be live-streaming or offering virtual or drive-in services.
- Places of worship may be closed for in-person service, or limited to 10 people.
- Have prayers and rites at home or virtually with extended family and friends.



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6. Managing holiday stress



- Sometimes there are greater expectations and stressors during the holidays.
- Some people may be worried about finances, mourning the loss of a loved one, or afraid a family member might get sick.
- We all need to be kinder to each other and take care of ourselves.
- Reach out to people you trust to talk with and share your feelings.
- Balance worries with facts – get reliable information at toronto.ca/COVID19.
- Limit consumption of alcohol and other drugs.
- Spend time in nature – go for a walk alone or with a household member.
- If you are feeling overwhelmed, talk to a health professional, counsellor or friend.
- Contact 211 if you need support and to find more [local mental health resources](#).

7. Holiday Donations



- During the COVID-19 pandemic there is a greater need for goods and services. For many families, there is also a long standing tradition to give, collect or organize donation drives during the holidays. Doing good, can makes us feel good.

This year, the safest way to support our community and our residents is to make a cash donation by credit card, cheque or e-transfer. See the City's [Holiday Wish List](#) or the [Toronto Firefighters Toy Drive](#) or [DonateTO](#). For people who choose to donate goods, [here are some ways](#) to do it more safely this year. Find a [list of goods and services](#) that are needed as part of the City's COVID-19 relief efforts.

References

Ontario Ministry of Health. Gatherings, ethno-cultural and festive occasions, and other events. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario; November 2020.
Government of Canada. COVID-19: Plan a safe holiday or celebration. Ottawa, ON: November 2020. Available from:
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/guidance-documents/plan-safe-holiday-celebration.html>

December 10, 2020