

INFECTION PREVENTION
GUIDE FOR

HOLIDAY EVENTS AND GATHERINGS

During COVID-19

The mission of Trivedi Consults is to provide tailored education, guidance and advice to reduce the development and spread of infections. We meet the needs of a variety of organizations including hospitals, healthcare and non-healthcare organizations and companies. As an independent contractor, our consulting uses evidence-based guidance to build practical implementation strategies based on local resources.



Reasoning

Practical adaptations can improve events and gatherings' safety and counteract the ways the COVID-19 virus spreads. This holiday season, we encourage utilization of multiple infection prevention measures to help reduce the risk of transmission of the COVID-19 virus. The single most important mitigation strategy is for everyone at the event to be vaccinated. For adults who are over 65 years of age, or who have underlying medical conditions, it is prudent that they receive their booster shot at least 2 weeks before the event.

- Several aspects of the COVID-19 virus make it highly contagious in groups of people:
 - » SARS-CoV-2 can be transmitted when someone isn't showing symptoms. People [may be most contagious 1-2 days before symptoms appear](#). If someone looks free of respiratory symptoms, it does not mean they are not infected with COVID-19.
 - » The COVID-19 Delta variant spreads easily and is endemic in many communities across the globe.
 - » Infection status cannot be discerned based on friendship, personal history, or knowledge about the person's activities, job, income, or education level.
- If the virus is present, **gatherings increase the opportunities for the virus to spread** because of activities such as mingling, eating, drinking, talking, laughing, and singing, which increase opportunities for the virus to spread. Such gatherings have been associated with ["superspreader" events](#), when one infected person transmits to many others.

- » Eating and drinking increases droplet emissions and requires removal of face coverings. Droplets may settle on commonly touched surfaces, shared food or drinks, or evaporate and float in the air and be inhaled.
- » Close person-to-person contact is the primary method of transmission of the COVID-19 virus, and gatherings often include demonstrations of closeness (sitting/standing close, hugging, touching hands).
- » Overlapping conversations increase ambient noise, especially indoors, and may result in attendees reducing their physical distance, talking louder, and/or removing face coverings to better understand each other.



Plan Ahead

Think through how to limit the transmission of infection before the gathering and inform your guests what is expected so that no one is surprised. The following risk mitigation strategies can increase the safety of the gathering:

- Ask your guests to **stay home if they or members of their households are sick.**
- Provide easy-to-find, accessible hand sanitizer.



- **Reduce size.** The risk that at least one person has COVID-19 increases with the number of people present ([GA Tech](#)). Ask people to RSVP in advance to be able plan the space to avoid crowding. Select a space where attendees can move about easily.
- **Improve airflow.** Choose outdoors instead of indoors, when possible. If indoors, select a space where you can open doors and/or windows and air circulates freely. Limit background noise (e.g. loud music) to avoid making people speak loudly to be understood.
- If everyone at the event is vaccinated, face coverings can be optional. Ask attendees who are **unvaccinated to wear a face covering.** Have some disposable masks on-hand, in case they are needed.
- **Consider testing.** Request that unvaccinated attendees, as well as attendees flying in, obtain a test prior to arriving at the gathering. One suggested strategy has the attendee take a COVID-19 test 3 days prior to the gathering, on the day of the gathering, and then 5-7 days after the event. For vaccinated individuals, a rapid antigen test will suffice. For unvaccinated individuals, a molecular test may be utilized with a rapid antigen test on the day of the gathering.
- **Check local conditions.** Your county may have stricter guidance than the state. Take extra precautions when local levels of viral transmission are high.