

HOLIDAY HEALTH HINTS

Four Ways To Have A Festive And Safe Holiday Season



This holiday season, West Virginians can give each other the gift of good health.

by the *We Can Do This*

COVID-19 Public Education Campaign

(NAPS)—Entering the second holiday season of the COVID-19 pandemic, West Virginians are eager to reconnect with family and friends and return to treasured holiday traditions. Some simple steps can keep family and friends healthy through their fall and winter celebrations.

“Every family has unique traditions, and they are eager to enjoy time with loved ones this year, especially if they skipped or changed their holiday plans due to COVID-19 in 2020,” said Dr. Michael Edmond, Chief Medical Officer, WVU Medicine. “With a little care and planning, it is possible to enjoy these special holiday traditions while making sure everyone stays healthy.”

As generations gather to celebrate, the No. 1 way to avoid spreading COVID-19, including to grandparents, young children and others who may be vulnerable, is to make sure everyone who is eligible gets vaccinated against COVID-19. Children ages 5-11 are the most recent group eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine. Learn more at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus.

People can take these additional steps to ensure they safely enjoy family, friends and special connections they may have missed recently, even as people from different households and different parts of the country gather.

Assess travel plans. Consider delaying travel until you're fully vaccinated. Remember, masks that cover your nose and mouth are required for everyone on planes, buses, trains and other public transportation. If you're unvaccinated, plan to get tested one to three days before your trip within the United States and three to five days after you return. Plan to self-quarantine for seven days, even if the test is negative. If you travel by car, be aware that you and your travel companions could be exposed to the virus on stops for gas, food and bathroom breaks. Remember to wear a mask, wash your hands frequently and maintain social distancing at these locations. If traveling internationally, especially to places where vaccination rates

are low and COVID-19 is spreading, visit the CDC's website for recommendations on international travel.

Get tested. If you've been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, or if you're not feeling well before the holidays, especially if you have COVID-19 symptoms, get tested. Tests are widely available at pharmacies and doctors' offices. Getting tested can provide security, knowing that you won't infect your friends and relatives and everyone can enjoy a stress-free holiday. If in doubt, consider staying home and joining festivities virtually. This will allow you to enjoy the fun while staying safe.

Pay attention to ventilation. When celebrating with your families, try to avoid crowded, poorly ventilated spaces. Consider moving celebrations outdoors, especially if you are planning a large get-together. Have a cookout or roast marshmallows. If you attend family festivities indoors where some guests may not be vaccinated, wear a well-fitting mask over your nose and mouth, remembering that you should never put a mask on a child under the age of 2. The CDC also recommends mask wearing in public indoor settings regardless of vaccination status.

Consider your health status. If you or someone in your household has a health condition or someone is taking medications that weaken the immune system, you should take extra precautions, even if you are fully vaccinated. The CDC recommends that those with weakened immune systems follow similar guidelines for unvaccinated people, like such as mask-wearing and social distancing.

The winter holidays are a time to reconnect and celebrate with people you care about. There are many ways to make this year's festivities a time to remember. Following these safety measures can allow West Virginians to gather together and practice traditions that make the holidays so special. Safe practices are key and the most effective way to ensure a joyful holiday is to get vaccinated.

For more information and to find a vaccine, visit www.vaccines.gov.