

Protecting Mom on Mother's Day: Guidance for Small Gatherings Over the Holiday Weekend

We're all eager to resume our contact with the world outside of our "stay-at-home" framework of the past six weeks. While the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment and Tri-County Health Department (TCHD) have been developing guidance for all sorts of businesses, less has been said about what is safe to do regarding social interactions. Since limiting face-to-face contact with others is still the very best way to reduce the spread of COVID-19, as we move into Safer-At-Home requirements, TCHD would like to provide practical guidance on how to stay safe during small social gatherings – like the ones you may be planning to see mom this weekend. The steps outlined in this guide are designed to off-set the increased risk brought by face-to-face contact. TCHD acknowledges the need for in-person connection with family and friends but encourages the public to take gatherings, even small family gatherings, very seriously. People should still stay home to the greatest extent possible since, in the times we live in, it is still Safer-At-Home.

Develop a Plan

It may sound silly to "develop a plan" for a small family gathering with 10 or less people, but this situation is new to everyone and a plan will ensure you have thought through situations that ensure social distancing and attendees are on the same page before gathering. As you think about a plan, consider the guidance below as it relates to the setting you will be gathering in and the type of activities you plan to have. You will find many considerations below but you are encouraged to be innovative in your approach to limiting contact and ensuring sanitation. We encourage you to be thorough and serious in your plan, but we also encourage you to keep things fun and easy as we all figure out what our new normal looks like.

The Basics

Social distancing – keeping space between yourself and other people that live outside of your home – masking, hand washing and staying home when you are sick are still the best way to slow the spread of COVID-19. Guests should be asked to wear a cloth mask and keep 6 feet apart from each other at all times. Guests should self-screen themselves for symptoms before coming to a gathering and anyone showing symptoms should stay home. Providing easy access to hand washing and/or hand sanitizer is a good way to encourage guests to wash their hands frequently. Provide paper towels by all sinks to dry hands to avoid using a common cloth towel with people outside your household. Special care should be taken in social interactions involving those people most vulnerable to serious complications of COVID-19 (those > 65 or with underlying illnesses) and it is important that gatherings remain small, with groups not exceeding 10 people at any time.

Things to Consider

Keeping Everyone Six Feet Apart

- Use tape or other marker to identify where people should sit or stand or to illustrate personal distance among people when gathering
- Consider having your gathering outside to increase the amount of space and open air
- Remind guests to stay 6 feet apart. Signs can be a fun way to keep guests aware of spacing
- Have a separate entrance and exit to decrease the number of people passing each other

Preventing Unnecessary Contact During In-Person Gatherings

- Set up a way to video-call in guests, especially family and friends that are vulnerable
- Have visitors come in shifts to decrease the number of people visiting at one time. Wipe down chairs and other touched surfaces between guests. Invite more vulnerable guests to visit earlier and alone if they do not remain at home
- Prop open doors and take lids off of trashcans to decrease the number of items touched
- Remove unnecessary items that guests may be tempted to touch like lawn games

Increasing Sanitation

- Keep disinfecting wipes close to commonly touched surfaces like doors and bathrooms and encourage guests to use them
- If serving food, ask guests to use their own utensils to serve themselves rather than any shared serving utensils. Consider a picnic style gathering and ask guests to bring their own food and drink or serve a pre-packaged meal instead of buffet or family-style.
- Identify someone to wipe down surfaces frequently
- Have hand sanitizer available in different areas and encourage people to use it frequently, in addition to hand washing

Other

- Provide cloth face coverings to those guests that do not have one
 - If possible, consider asking guests to bring their own chairs to decrease the number of touched surfaces
 - Before allowing young children to participate, consider their ability to understand and adhere to social distancing
 - If inside, consider opening windows to increase ventilation
 - Consider the level of transmission in your area and in the areas where guests may be visiting from. If the transmission rate is high in your area it is riskier to gather, even in small groups of just family
- Send your plan to guests ahead of time to allow them to prepare and ask questions: this is a time to be intentional about taking steps to protect yourself and family/friends and not leave it to chance.

Want More Information on COVID-19? Visit <http://www.tchd.org/818/Coronavirus-COVID-19>