

Guidance for Small Gatherings

Tri-County Health Department (TCHD) would like to provide practical guidance on how to stay safe during small social gatherings, which we define as <50 people. The steps outlined in this guide are designed to decrease the risk brought by in person gatherings. 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 it is still indeed “Safer at Home”.

Develop a Plan

It may sound silly to “develop a plan” for a gathering, but this situation is new to everyone. A plan allows you to think through how you can help guests maintain social distancing, where you can reduce the number of shared surfaces/items and how you can keep those items sanitized throughout your event. A plan also ensures that you and your guests 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 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 with 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. Take special care 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 as small as possible. Attendees should be able to easily maintain 6 feet of distance, even when moving about.

Things to Consider

Keeping Everyone Six Feet Apart

- Use tape or other markers to identify where people should sit or stand or to illustrate personal distance among people when gathering.
- Use outdoor space whenever possible 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 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 and doors to increase ventilation.
- If you plan to use your own private pool, clean handrails often; avoid sharing pool noodles, goggles, kickboards and toys; avoid using slides and other structures designed for climbing or playing; take turns swimming to reduce the number of people in the pool at one time; remind visitors to keep their distance and use EPA approved disinfectants.
- 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.
- 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.

If you have questions or concerns, do not hesitate to reach out to TCHD's Business Re-Opening Task Force:
covidbusinessrecovery@tchd.org

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

Want more information on the risks of everyday activities? Visit <https://covid19.colorado.gov/risks-benefits>