

Guidance for Small Gatherings

With summer coming to an end and Labor Day right around the corner, the Tri-County Health Department (TCHD) would like to provide practical guidance on how to stay safe during small social gatherings. The steps outlined in this guide are designed to offset 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, 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 must 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. 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 to ensure 6-foot distancing
- 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 of trashcans to decrease the number of items touched
- Remove unnecessary items that guests may be tempted to touch like lawn games
- If serving food, avoid buffet style meals and shared utensils. Consider a box lunch style or picnic style with people bringing their own food to decrease movement and shared surfaces that may increase the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

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

- Public health orders require people attending events, both indoors and outdoors, to wear cloth face coverings
- 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 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.
- Consider celebrating the end of summer virtually:
 - Run around your neighborhood in the [Bronco's Virtual 7K Race to get out of the house and support a good cause.](#)
 - Watch the [Bronco's Tebowmania](#) special and relive Tim Tebow's most exciting games
 - Watch the [Kentucky Derby](#) with a small group of 10 or fewer
 - Visit the [Commonwheel Visual Arts Festival](#) virtually from Manitou Springs

- Run the virtual [Boulder Boulder](#) 10K Race with real-time remote racing

Find more information on COVID-19 at www.tchd.org/COVID-19 and review ways to reduce your risk with everyday activities at covid19.colorado.gov/risks-benefits