



COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO HEALTH AGENCY
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT
MEMORANDUM

To: All SLO County Residents
From: Dr. Penny Borenstein, County Public Health Officer
Date: November 16, 2020
Subject: Recommended Activities for a Safe Thanksgiving (Guidance)

Summary

COVID-19 continues to pose a substantial risk to those in San Luis Obispo County. Our community is doing a tremendous job adapting the way we do everything in order to slow the spread of COVID-19 and prevent larger outbreaks. As the holiday season approaches, each of us will also need to take a different approach to celebrating this year. This will include avoiding high-risk activities that can easily spread COVID-19 and replacing or modifying them with low-risk alternatives.

Local health officials recommend following the State's COVID-19 [Private Gathering Guidelines, which](#) specifies no more than three households gathering (the same three, not different groups each time) as well as events not lasting more than two hours. Remember, gatherings are most likely to spread COVID-19 and spikes of infection are possible even in small gatherings and even among close relatives.

Help San Luis Obispo County further progress through the State's Blueprint for a Safer Economy and slow the spread of COVID-19 by avoiding in-person group gatherings, which remain the highest risk activity for transmission. As the holiday season continues, public health officials are concerned that COVID-19 transmission will remain widespread and even increase.

Guidance for a Safer Thanksgiving

Much of our daily lives, including how we celebrate, has changed due to COVID-19, but there are still ways to safely celebrate the Thanksgiving season.

Travel Tips and Considerations

The incidence of COVID-19 is increasing in many states and countries. Travel increases your chance of getting and spreading COVID-19. **Staying home is the best way to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.** Persons arriving in San Luis Obispo County from other areas, or SLO County residents returning from other states or countries, could increase the risk of COVID-19 spread. In addition, travel itself can be a risk for exposure to COVID-19, particularly travel through shared conveyance such as air, bus or rail travel.

According to the recent [State-issued travel advisory \(November 13, 2020\)](#), anyone arriving in California from other states or countries, including returning California residents, should practice **self-quarantine for 14 days after arrival**. These persons should limit their

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interactions to their immediate household. This recommendation does not apply to individuals who cross state or country borders for essential travel, which includes work and study, critical infrastructure support, economic services and supply chains, health, immediate medical care, and safety and security.

Californians are encouraged to stay home or in their region and avoid non-essential travel to other states or countries. Avoiding travel can reduce the risk of virus transmission and bringing the virus back to California. "Non-essential travel" includes travel that is considered tourism or recreational in nature.

If you choose to travel, please do so responsibly. Above all, do not travel if you are sick or have COVID-19 symptoms. Health officials recommend making special considerations before, during and after your trip. For example:

1. Before your trip:
 - a. Get tested for COVID-19 at one of the County's free testing clinics and stay home if you test positive;
 - b. Check the travel restrictions for your destination and consider self-quarantine for 14 days prior to traveling;
2. While you travel:
 - a. Wear your mask over your nose and mouth when others are present;
 - b. Wash your hands frequently or sanitize;
 - c. Keep your distance;
3. When you arrive to your destination:
 - a. Continue safe practices, including wearing face masks around people who don't live with you;
 - b. Gather outdoors only and avoid crowds;
4. Upon your return:
 - a. Take your temperature and monitor your health for symptoms;
 - b. Consider working remotely if you think you have been exposed or participated in high-risk activities, such as gatherings and public transportation;
 - c. Get tested for COVID-19 to determine your health status.

For more tips to avoid getting and spreading COVID-19 in common travel situations, review the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [Travel Considerations During COVID-19](#).

Lowest Risk Activities for Celebrating Thanksgiving

The safest way to celebrate Thanksgiving in 2020 is **to spend time with people in the same household or to celebrate virtually**. Some alternatives include:

- Prepare and deliver holiday food or traditional meals to non-household family members, especially those at a higher risk of severe COVID-19 illness, without high-risk contact by leaving items at their door.
- Shop local online retailers rather than attending the rush of in-store shopping that usually occurs before, on, or after Thanksgiving Day.

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- Stay local this holiday season and postpone your travels out of area until next year.

Moderate Risk Activities

In general, the more people from different households with whom a person interacts, the closer the physical interaction is, and the longer the interaction lasts, the higher the risk that a person with COVID-19 infection –symptomatic or asymptomatic -- may spread it to others. An alternative that is moderate risk but still provides for celebration is to:

- Host or attend brief outdoor, in-person dinners with family and friends within your same community. (Refer to the State’s COVID-19 [Private Gathering Guidelines](#) and note that all gatherings for counties in the State’s Purple Tier must be outside.)

Higher Risk

- Crowded in-store shopping before, on, or after Thanksgiving Day
- Out-of-area travel. If travel is essential, stay informed of the [risks involved](#). Remember, even those who are asymptomatic can still spread the virus
- Taking family members from facilities at which elderly or vulnerable residents live, even if it’s just for dinner.

Highest Risk (Not Permitted)

Activities that promote congregating and mixing of many households without necessary modifications, particularly on crowded areas, can increase the spread of COVID-19. That type of mixing is **not currently permitted in California**. Such activities include:

- Carnivals or festivals
- Live entertainment (including live music)
- Large indoor, in-person gatherings with many people from outside your household

Conclusion

There are still ways to enjoy the holiday, while being safe and continuing to do everything you can to slow the spread of COVID-19. If you want SLO County to move forward, not backward, please continue do your part as you celebrate Thanksgiving.