

Celebrate the Holiday Season Safely

Ontario Provides Public Health Advice on How to Protect You and Your Loved Ones

November 25, 2020

Office of the Premier

TORONTO — The holidays are going to look a little different this year due to COVID-19. To support Ontarians as they begin to safely plan for the season, the Ontario government, based on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and input from the Public Health Measures Table, is providing preliminary guidance on how to safely celebrate this year and protect your loved ones.

Details were provided today by Premier Doug Ford, Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, and Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health.

"I know there are many people looking forward to their traditional family celebrations at this time of year, but to keep your loved ones safe, traditions will have to be adjusted," said Premier Ford. "We're asking everyone to please stick to your own household when celebrating. Avoid big holiday parties or large family dinners to help us stop the spread of this deadly virus. By following this public health advice, we can all have a safe and fun holiday season."

No matter where you live in the province, the safest way to spend the holidays this year is by only celebrating in person with the people you live with and celebrating virtually with everyone else. If you live alone, consider exclusively celebrating with one additional household as a safe way to spend the holidays.

While **public health measures** to keep Ontarians safe may be different in communities across the province, the following is some general advice to consider when planning your holiday season:

Safer Holiday Activities

Virtual holiday gatherings or events with family, friends or co-workers.

Outdoor holiday activities such as building a snowman or going on a sleigh ride with members of your household.

Visiting Santa Claus, Mrs. Claus or their elves outdoors and taking photos while keeping two metres apart.

Attending a drive-in or drive-through event.

Watching holiday or other movies with your household.

Decorating your doors and putting up lights around your home.

Lighting your menorah.

Baking holiday treats with your immediate household.

Riskier Holiday Activities

In-person holiday gatherings or events, particularly gatherings where masks or face coverings must be removed to eat or drink.

Indoor holiday activities such as having overnight guests or sleepovers with friends or people outside your household.

Visiting Santa Claus, Mrs. Claus or their elves indoors and taking photos without being two metres apart. Children are not permitted to sit on Santa's lap this year.

Visiting family and friends for non-essential reasons.

Individuals and families in higher transmission areas should avoid going to lower transmission areas, except for essential reasons.

Hosting or attending social gatherings or organized public events that do not adhere to provincial or local requirements. See below for information about the gathering limits that apply in the various zones.

Donating to your favourite holiday charity or toy drive.

While the above is recommended advice from public health officials, please remember you must adhere to public health and workplace safety measures and rules in your region.

A new holiday web page will be launched shortly to provide more direct and up-to-date guidance on how individuals and families can plan for a safe holiday season.

"The holidays are a special time of the year for many people, and while we all want to spend time with family and friends, we must celebrate safely to stop the spread of COVID-19," said Minister Elliott. "With the recent news about several vaccines there's light at the end of the tunnel. I realize that it won't be easy, but we must continue to follow public health advice and look for new and creative ways to celebrate this year."

It is important for everyone to adhere to the public health measures in their communities, especially when connecting with others. All Ontarians are strongly recommended to continue doing the following:

- Stay home if you have COVID-19 symptoms, even if they are mild;
- Avoid social gatherings and limit close contacts to your household or the people you live with;
- Maintain two metres of physical distancing from everyone else;
- Adhere to the restrictions in your region on public and private gatherings;
- Wear a face covering indoors and wear one outdoors if physical distancing cannot be maintained or if wearing one is required;
- Wash your hands thoroughly and regularly;
- Cover your cough;
- Get tested if you have symptoms compatible with COVID-19, or if you've been advised of exposure by your local public health unit or through the COVID Alert mobile app;
- Individuals and families from higher transmission regions should avoid travel to lower transmission regions (e.g., from Red level to Orange level), except for essential reasons; and
- Download the [COVID Alert mobile app](#).

"We understand the traditional importance of visiting family and gathering during the holiday season, but as we are continuing to live in unprecedented times, we need to look at new ways of celebrating and marking special occasions," said Dr. Williams. "Everyone has a role to play in stopping the spread of COVID-19 and by strictly following these measures we can all plan for a healthy holiday season while keeping our loved ones safe."

Ontarians are advised to visit [Ontario.ca/covidresponse](https://ontario.ca/covidresponse) to learn what public health measures are in place in their community, and check with their [public health unit](#) for any additional information or restrictions. Advice may also vary by the level a public health unit is in, which can change depending on public health trends in the region as the holiday season approaches.

Social Gathering Limits by Level under the Regulations

- In all levels, people are required to comply with public health guidance on physical distancing;
- Indoor and outdoor limits can not be combined to increase the applicable limit;
- The specified limits apply to gatherings even if in a private dwelling, including houses, apartment buildings, condominium buildings and post-secondary student residences;
- The limits do not apply to a gathering of members of a single household.

Green-Prevent, Yellow-Protect and Orange-Restrict:

- The limit for indoor social gatherings is 10 people;
- The limit for outdoor social gatherings is 25 people.

Red-Control:

- The limit for indoor social gatherings is five people;
- The limit for outdoor social gatherings is 25 people.

Lockdown (Stage 1):

- Indoor social gatherings are not permitted, except for a gathering of members of a single household, or a gathering that includes members of a household and one other person from outside that household who lives alone;
- The limit for outdoor social gatherings is 10 people.

Note that capacity limits for religious services, rites or ceremonies, including wedding services and funeral services are different from the above. Refer to [O. Reg. 82/20](#), [O. Reg. 263/20](#), and [O. Reg. 364/20](#).

If a person or business is not found compliant with orders under the *Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020* ("Reopening Ontario Act"), they could be ticketed with a fine of \$750 under the Act.

Quick Facts

- Individuals living away from home, including those studying at colleges and universities, should consider doing a self-quarantine, or reducing close contact with others, 10 to 14 days before returning home for the holidays.
- The fewer people you have contact with, the lower the risk of exposure to COVID-19. Virtual gatherings and virtual events are the safest way to visit or celebrate occasions with people outside your household.
- In Red-Control regions, trips outside of the home should only be for essential reasons (e.g. work, school, groceries, pharmacy, health care, assisting vulnerable individuals, or physical activity).
- If you are concerned you were exposed to COVID-19 or have symptoms, take the online [COVID-19 self-assessment](#).
- Get tested if you have [symptoms compatible with COVID-19](#), or if you have been advised of exposure by your local public health unit or through the COVID Alert app. Visit [Ontario.ca/covidtest](#) to find the nearest testing location.
- To find the right supports, visit [COVID-19: Support for People](#), which has information about the many available and free mental health services and supports.

Additional Resources

- [Gatherings, Ethno-Cultural and Festive Occasions, and Other Events](#)
- Find out what level and which [regional public measures](#) are in place for your area.
- [Ontario Updating COVID-19 Response Framework to Help Stop the Spread of COVID-19](#)
- Visit Ontario's [website](#) to learn more about how the province continues to protect the people of Ontario from COVID-19.

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