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Dept. of Health Services: Gov. Evers and DHS Ask Wisconsinites to Celebrate Holidays Safely

Posted on Thursday, Nov 12, 2020

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Amid record high cases, hospitalizations, and deaths, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) is asking residents to adjust their holiday plans in order to stop the spread of COVID-19. DHS has published best practices for celebrating the upcoming holidays that enable Wisconsinites to honor their traditions while doing their part to protect their communities.

“I know this upcoming holiday season is going to be especially tough,” said Governor Tony Evers. “But the actions we take now will ensure that we can celebrate together once this pandemic is over. Folks, I am asking everyone to come together and take the steps needed to slow the spread of this virus. In doing so, we can protect our loved ones and save lives.”

Since early September, COVID-19 hospitalizations have increased by more than 433%, and the seven-day average of new confirmed cases has increased by more than 500%. Cases have been rising across all age groups and races and ethnicities. With all 72 Wisconsin counties now reporting at least one COVID-19 death and a more than 500% increase in the seven-day average of newly reported deaths compared to just two months ago, experts are projecting(link is external) the state could surpass 5,000 deaths by the end of this year. In response to this steep surge, Gov. Evers issued Executive Order #94(link is external), which calls on Wisconsinites to adopt a series of public health recommendations that will help flatten the curve.

“Our hospitals are overwhelmed, our health care workers are exhausted, and too many families have lost a loved one. Wisconsin is at a critical juncture right now,”

said DHS Deputy Secretary Julie Willems Van Dijk. “But that doesn’t mean we have to choose between celebrating the holidays and the virus. By adapting plans to align with public health guidelines, we can still celebrate the holidays while reducing the burden of COVID-19 in our communities.” Some of the holiday recommendations include:

- Sharing meals with people who live in your household.
- Preparing meals or treats and delivering to loved ones in a way that avoids contact.
- Having virtual gatherings with friends and family.
- Shopping online or ordering delivery.
- Watching sports, events, or parades from home.

DHS recognizes that this pandemic has caused all of us to make changes to our lives, and our holidays, to protect each other from COVID-19. These are difficult times for everyone, and while we must do our part to protect our physical well-being, we also need to monitor our emotional health. For resources on coping and ways manage stress, visit Resilient Wisconsin.

DHS also acknowledges that this pandemic has affected households financially. For those who may be struggling during this pandemic, there are programs and economic support available. To access assistance and services across Wisconsin, visit the Response Resources for Wisconsinites webpage.

Find the latest information about COVID-19 on the DHS website and follow @DHSWI on Facebook(link is external) and Twitter(link is external), and @dhs.wi on Instagram(link is external).