Dept. of Health Services: Urges Wisconsinites to celebrate the holidays safely

Posted on Thursday, Nov 18, 2021

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop](#).

As we look ahead to the winter holiday season, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) encourages Wisconsinites to take steps to protect their health and the health of those around them. You can celebrate safely even while the disease continues to spread.

"Celebrating the holiday season and its traditions is important to Wisconsin families, and we can all celebrate safely this year if we remember to take a few simple steps," said DHS Secretary-designee Karen Timberlake. "Family and friends planning to gather for celebrations should get vaccinated as soon as possible, including getting a booster if you are eligible, as the COVID-19 vaccine is still the best ways to minimize risk from the virus. If you will not be fully vaccinated in time for the holidays, it is especially critical that you take additional steps to protect yourself and others around you by wearing a mask in public spaces, getting tested if you feel sick or have COVID-19 symptoms, and staying home if you aren't feeling well."

Cases of COVID-19 are very high across Wisconsin. Wisconsin hospitals are also nearing capacity, due in part to increasing numbers of people with COVID-19 requiring hospitalization. The overwhelming majority of people in hospitals with COVID-19 have not been fully vaccinated.

Children are at particular risk, as they represent the [highest number of new confirmed cases](#) compared to other age groups. Although children are less likely than adults to become seriously ill from COVID-19, they can spread the disease to others in their households.

Ideas for staying connected while minimizing your risk for getting or spreading COVID-19

If you plan to gather for the holidays, follow these recommendations to help minimize your risk for getting or spreading COVID-19:

- Everyone who is eligible to get vaccinated should get any of the COVID-19 vaccines as soon as possible.
    - You are considered fully vaccinated against COVID-19 two weeks after you've received either a single-dose vaccine, like Johnson & Johnson, or the second dose of two-dose vaccine like Pfizer or Moderna.
- If you have symptoms of COVID-19, or were in close contact with someone with COVID-19, please get tested.
- Avoid attending gatherings if you are sick, have symptoms of COVID-19, or were in close contact with someone with COVID-19.
- Wear a well-fitted mask over your nose and mouth if you are in a public indoor setting if you are not fully vaccinated.
    - Even if you are fully vaccinated, you should wear a mask indoors if you are in an area with high transmission.
    - Consider wearing a mask at private, family gatherings if you have loved ones who may be at increased risk for severe COVID-19 illness.
- If you gather to celebrate, try to physically distance as much as possible.
- Gathering outdoors is always safer. Meet with friends and family for a post-meal walk outside.
    - If you celebrate indoors, provide extra space between the chairs at the table.
    - Consider setting up different areas in your home for activities to allow for physical distancing.

If food is served at a gathering:

- Avoid crowding in areas where food is being served.

Special Considerations:

- People who have a condition or are taking medications that weaken their immune system may not be fully protected even if they are fully vaccinated and have received an [additional dose](#).
    - Take all precautions against COVID-19, such as wearing a mask, physical

distancing, and practicing good hygiene, if you or a family member have a weakened immune system.
  ○ Consider wearing a mask indoors regardless of your vaccination status if a member of your household is immunocompromised or unvaccinated.
  ○ Do not put a mask on children younger than 2 years old.

If you are traveling, consider these guidelines as you plan:

- Follow CDC guidance(link is external) for domestic and international travel.
- Delay traveling until you and those you are traveling with are fully vaccinated.
- If you have symptoms or have close contact with someone who has COVID-19, be sure to use a trusted testing provider to get tested. Along with your health care provider, these include a community testing site or your local health department. At-home specimen collection kits are also available.
- Avoid crowded and poorly ventilated spaces.

To find a COVID-19 vaccine provider in your community, visit Vaccines.gov(link is external), or call 211 or 877-947-2211. For up-to-date information about Wisconsin's COVID-19 response, visit the DHS COVID-19 webpage. We encourage you to follow @DHSWI on Facebook(link is external), Twitter(link is external), or dhs.wi on Instagram(link is external) for more information about COVID-19.