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COVID-19: Staying Safe in Your Community

On Thursday May 13, the [CDC released updated guidance](#) that **fully vaccinated people can resume activities they did before the pandemic, including participating in indoor and outdoor activities – large or small – without wearing a mask or physically distancing.**

Mask wearing continues to be an important COVID-19 mitigation strategy in [public transportation](#), [schools](#), [health care settings](#), correctional facilities, homeless shelters, and other settings where additional regulations still exist, regardless of vaccination status. DHS is currently working on updating webpages and publications to include updated guidance for fully vaccinated people. We continue to encourage everyone to [get vaccinated against COVID-19](#).

COVID-19 is still spreading and [new variants of SARS-CoV-2](#), the virus that causes COVID-19, continue to be identified in our state. Studies show that new variants of SARS-CoV-2 may spread more easily and rapidly than the original strain of SARS-CoV-2. This page shares resources and tips to help individuals, businesses, organizations, and services in our communities stay safe.

We recognize some people have privileges and resources that allow them to choose how and when to interact in person and impact their access to vaccination, while others must work to provide the goods, services, and care we depend on. We know that many people do not have a choice of where they work or live, and that some cannot engage in prevention practices or face barriers to vaccination due to underlying conditions, socioeconomic factors, or [systemic racism](#). It is because of this that we must come together as a community to protect each other and for those of us who can, we must continue following public health best practices to keep ourselves and our communities safe.

- Wear a [mask](#).
- [Stay at least 6 feet away from other people when possible.](#)
- [Wash hands](#) frequently.
- Stay home when sick.
- [Get tested](#) if you have [symptoms](#) or have been [exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19.
- [Get vaccinated](#) when you are eligible.
- Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces.

If you are [fully vaccinated](#), you no longer need to wear a mask or practice physical distancing when

outdoors with members of your household or while attending a small, outdoor gathering. **However, you should still wear a mask when:**

- Attending crowded, outdoor events.
- Indoors with unvaccinated people from multiple households. For example:
 - At a social gathering
 - While shopping
 - At a restaurant or bar
 - At a barber or hair salon
 - At a movie theater or museum
 - At a worship service
 - While on public transportation

[Learn more about the COVID-19 vaccine.](#)

Guidance for specific activities (A-Z)

Considerations for gatherings

We understand that no list of activities can be exhaustive. Here we provide some examples of activities and share resources and tips for staying safe.

Beaches

Guidance for beach managers and considerations for visiting public beaches are available from the CDC.

Biking and Walking Paths

The CDC has provided tips to protect yourself and others from COVID-19 while visiting parks and recreation facilities. The CDC also provides additional information for safely engaging in outdoor activities.

Camping

See tips for safely [visiting parks and recreational facilities](#) from the CDC. Know your travel risk and check out their [camping infographic](#).

Community Gardening

The CDC has provided [recommendations](#) for managers of outdoor learning gardens and community gardens.

Cooling Centers

[Guidance](#) to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in cooling centers is available from the CDC.

Farmers Markets

The following guidance is from the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) and the Department of Health Services (DHS). This guidance was created in partnership with Kristin Krokowski, commercial horticulture educator with the UW-Madison Division of Extension.

Farmers markets should follow applicable state, local, and tribal public health recommendations, and work with their local and tribal public health departments who can help assess the current level of mitigation needed in their specific area.

Best Practices

These best practices can help to minimize the spread of COVID-19 at farmers markets; they are not requirements. Each market should proactively take action to provide a safe shopping environment, while considering the needs of the community and any applicable state and local orders.

What can the market do?

Encourage shoppers, vendors and market staff over the age of two to wear masks. Masks are not recommended for children under 2 years old or for people with a disability that prevents them from wearing a mask.

Maintain physical distancing between all individuals on the premises to the maximum extent possible, with 6 feet being an appropriate standard.

Provide an adequate number of handwashing and/or hand sanitizer stations for the expected number of customers and vendors.

Limit or eliminate music, tabling, activities, promotions, and pets at the market.

Minimize funneling customers between two lines of vendors where the lines from the vendors block thru-traffic, thereby creating a crowd.

Assign vendor locations so that customers and vendors can maintain a safe interpersonal distance of at least 6 feet.

Post physical distancing messaging and signage. Consider using picture-based messaging or translating signs into the languages used by those in your community and the customers you serve.

What can vendors do?

Wear a mask that fully covers your mouth and nose, and wear it throughout your time at the market.

Avoid coming to the market if you feel sick, and encourage your employees to stay home from the market if they feel sick.

Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds with soap and water. Encourage regular hand washing among employees as well.

Use hand sanitizer only on visibly clean hands; hand sanitizer is not effective when hands are visibly dirty.

Maintain at least 6 feet of physical distance from customers and other vendors whenever possible.

As a general food safety practice, avoid bare hand contact with ready-to-eat foods to help reduce the risk of contamination.

What can customers do?

Wear a mask that fully covers your mouth and nose, and wear it throughout your time at the market.

Avoid going to a farmers market if you or someone in your household is sick.

Maintain at least 6 feet of physical distance from other customers and vendors whenever possible.

Minimize the number of people you bring with you to the market. This helps limit crowd size.

Use hand sanitizer or hand washing stations frequently.

Faith-Based Organizations

Mental and physical health are important during the COVID-19 pandemic, and so is spiritual health. Taking time to be mindful, meditate, and pray are great ways to practice spirituality individually or with other household members.

Instead of attending spiritual gatherings in person, you can safely view or listen to almost any form of spiritual service through:

Television

Radio

Online video recordings

Live streams

Podcasts

If you choose to attend spiritual gatherings in person, take steps to protect yourself and others from COVID-19. Remember to wear a mask, keep 6 feet from others, frequently wash your hands, and get vaccinated when you are able. For additional resources and guidance on how to safely practice or observe your faith, reach out to your spiritual community and its local leaders. Considerations for communities of faith are also available from the CDC.

Graduation Ceremonies

The Department of Health Services (DHS) recommends that people avoid medium- and large-sized gatherings, including traditional graduation ceremonies. This guidance applies even for those who are fully vaccinated. If schools decide to hold an in-person graduation ceremony, they should ensure that their events comply with all applicable state and local public health orders.

Schools that choose to hold graduation ceremonies can follow CDC's recommended phased mitigation strategies (see bottom of Table 2) for extracurricular activities to help inform safety measures based on their local level of community transmission. Schools holding graduation ceremonies should also follow CDC's Guidance for Organizing Large Events and Gatherings.

Some ideas to mitigate the risk of in-person graduation ceremonies include:

Holding ceremonies outdoors in a space large enough to allow for physical distancing of 6 feet or more between members of different households.

Limiting the number of attendees for each graduate.

Requiring masks for all participants and in-person attendees.

For indoor ceremonies, making sure ventilation systems are operating properly and increase the circulation of outdoor air as much as possible.

Ensuring that there are adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene, such as soap, water, hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol, paper towels, and no-touch trash cans.

If open, limit the number of people who occupy restrooms at one time to allow for physical distancing.

Ensuring that people standing in line can maintain 6-feet of distance from one another. It may be helpful to post signs or markers to help attendees maintain the appropriate physical distance.

Encouraging guests to avoid singing or shouting, especially indoors. If possible, keep music levels down so people do not have to shout or speak loudly to be heard.

Some ideas to honor seniors through virtual or other alternative celebrations include:

Holding a virtual graduation ceremony and mailing diplomas to graduates.

Asking seniors to send individual videos with short messages to their graduating classmates. This, with the traditional filmed speeches by invited speakers, creates a longer film highlighting the graduates' high school experiences and provides a long-term memento.

Highlighting seniors on social media each day with special hashtags that allow for family, friends, and community members to congratulate individual students (who agree to participate) with photos and messages.

Using main street windows to display pictures of individual students (who agree to participate).

Securing a digital billboard and displaying messages directly from graduates to their class. Consider expanding to include messages from families and friends to graduates as well.

Individualized ceremonies: School leaders could visit each graduate's home, while remaining outside and at least 6 feet away, to congratulate and take photos of each graduate in their cap and gown and holding their diploma. This type of recognition may need to be conducted over the course of several days depending on the class size.

Drive-through ceremonies, with families in separate vehicles. Examples of drive-through ceremonies that involve minimal risk include:

Model 1: Students and their families drive up to the school wearing masks. Only the student gets out of the car to receive the diploma, the emcee says the name of the student on a loud speaker, a photo or video is taken of the student more than 6 feet from school staff, and the family drives away. All of this would be done in a single-file line with support from law enforcement to ensure public safety and flow of traffic.

Model 2: All family members stay in the car. The senior is in the front seat and the school's representative passes the diploma through the car window and shares congratulations. Everyone wears masks. This could be held in alphabetical order, and would be done in a single-file line with support from law enforcement to ensure public safety and flow of traffic.

As school districts plan for alternatives to traditional graduation ceremonies, they should coordinate with local public health departments, local law enforcement, legal counsel, families, and other community members to ensure that any graduation celebration meets all expectations and requirements for physical distancing or other public health protections.

Events, Festivals, and Parties

The CDC has provided [guidance](#) and [frequently asked questions](#) for event planners. Tips for staying safe [when attending an event or gathering](#) are also available.

[Potlucks and Barbecues](#)

The CDC has outlined steps to reduce the risk of getting and spreading COVID-19 when [hosting cook-outs](#). [Considerations for community-based organizations](#) hosting these types of activities are also available. Because of the difficulty for individuals to maintain physical distancing in these kinds of social settings and inability to wear a mask while eating and drinking, events like these, especially those with shared food, are considered high-risk activities.

[Public Pools, Splash Pads, and Water Parks](#)

[Guidance](#) for operators of public pools, hot tubs, and water playgrounds is available from the CDC. Tips for reducing risk [while visiting pools](#) are also available.

[Play Dates](#)

Children will not be vaccinated for quite some time. In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19, limit in-person playtime and connect virtually with other children if that option is available to you. The CDC has shared [ways to protect children from getting and spreading COVID-19](#).

[Shelters](#)

The CDC has shared [guidance](#) to support homeless service providers, including overnight emergency shelters, day shelters, and meal service providers.

[Severe Weather](#)

The CDC has [tips](#) for keeping you and your family safe from severe weather during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Summer Heat Safety Tips

See summer heat safety tips on the [CDC's website](#).

Youth and Summer Camps

Check out the CDC for [Guidance for Youth and Summer Camps During COVID-19](#).

It is important to remember that in the middle of a pandemic, there is no such thing as a risk-free activity. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have learned about ways to reduce risk and how to make some activities safer. The vaccine is just one tool we have to help reduce the spread of COVID-19; it is not a free pass to immediately go back to doing all of the things we love in the same ways.

If you are not fully vaccinated yet, DHS continues to advise against attending and hosting gatherings with people who don't live with you and who are not fully vaccinated. Gathering with other unvaccinated people you do not live with is still considered a high-risk activity that contributes to the spread of COVID-19.

If you choose to attend or host a gathering, consider actions you can take to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Keep the gathering small, preferably with only one other household.

Set expectations for celebrating together safely ahead of time by having a conversation with guests or including the details in your written invitation.

If you're invited to a gathering, it's okay to ask them about their expectations. It's also okay if you decide to stay home or to participate virtually. If you arrive and become uncomfortable, it's okay to politely leave. Do what's best for you.

Hold the gathering outdoors or in a well-ventilated area if possible.

Although gathering outdoors is still a risky activity, it is safer than gathering indoors.

If indoors, bring in fresh air by opening windows and doors.

Wear a mask both indoors and outdoors and encourage others to do the same. Make sure your mask fits snugly over both your mouth and nose.

If you are hosting a gathering, consider having clean masks available to offer your guests.

Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces throughout the gathering.

Frequently wash your hands before and after touching shared surfaces. Consider placing hand sanitizer near frequently touched areas and objects.

Keep 6 feet of distance between yourself and others as much as possible. Consider arranging seating 6 feet apart or placing markers that remind individuals to practice physical distancing.

Guests should avoid direct contact, including handshakes and hugs, with others not from their household.

Avoid shouting, cheering, and singing. Keep background music at a low volume.

Suggest everyone brings their own food and drink for themselves.

If food is being served, use single-use cups, plates, and utensils.

Avoid crowding in areas where food is being served.

Avoid "potluck" or buffet style food options.

Avoid gathering if you are sick or think you may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19.

Learn more about attending or hosting a gathering on [CDC's website](#).

Considerations for fully vaccinated people

People who have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, meaning it has been two weeks or longer since they have finished their vaccine series, are at a much lower risk of severe illness, hospitalization and death from the disease. They may take that into consideration when assessing their individual risk as it relates to interactions with others. See the [CDC's document for guidance on Choosing Safer Activities](#).

Fully vaccinated people no longer need to wear a mask or practice physical distancing when outdoors with members of their household or while attending a small, outdoor gathering.

However, they should still wear a mask when:

Attending crowded outdoor events.

Indoors with unvaccinated people from multiple households.

Travel


DHS recommends Wisconsinites cancel or postpone all travel unless you are fully vaccinated. If you must travel, please consider [actions to reduce the spread of COVID-19](#).

Coping and Practicing Resilience During the COVID-19 Pandemic

We have all made changes to our lives to protect ourselves, our loved ones, and our communities. It's important, but it's not easy, and we need to all remember that it's OK to ask for help. [Learn how to recognize and manage stress as well as build resilience.](#)

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[Helpful Resources for Wisconsinites](#)

 The information on this page contains Department of Health Services (DHS) recommendations, some of which may be required based on state or local orders. Please contact your [local or tribal health department](#) for more information on COVID-19 related public health orders in your community.