



State of California—Health and Human  
Services Agency  
**California Department of  
Public Health**



April 15, 2021

**TO:** All Californians

**SUBJECT:** Updated Guidance for Gatherings

## Summary

This guidance is effective April 15, 2021, and provides an updated plan for Californians to gather outside their households and replaces all prior gatherings guidance. It applies to private gatherings. All other gatherings not covered by existing sector guidance are prohibited.[1]

Gatherings are defined as social situations that bring together people from different households at the same time in a single space or place. As defined by this guidance, they do not require a pre-ordained guest list, and the guidance assumes that not all guests are fully vaccinated.

- For guidance relating to events with a defined guest list, see Guidance for Private Events.
- For guidance relating to fully vaccinated persons, see CDPH Guidance on COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People

## Context

COVID-19 continues to pose a severe risk to communities and requires all people in California to follow necessary precautions until enough people in the state have been vaccinated or achieve immunity. Until then, the safest way to gather continues to be limiting mixing among different households and, if gathering occurs, spending time outdoors. When people from different households mix, the risk of COVID-19 transmission increases, including highly contagious variants that have been identified in California.

In general, the more people from different households a person interacts with at a gathering, the closer the physical interaction is, and the longer the interaction lasts, the higher the risk that a person with a COVID-19 infection, symptomatic or asymptomatic, may spread it to others. Public health studies have also shown that the risk of transmission is increased in indoor spaces, particularly in the absence of appropriate ventilation.[2] Unlike indoor spaces, wind and air in outdoor spaces can help reduce spread of the virus from one person to another.

All gatherings pose a higher risk of transmission and spread of COVID-19 when people mix from different households and communities. The likelihood of transmission and spread increases with laughing, singing, loud

talking and difficulty maintaining physical distance. Limiting attendance at gatherings is a way to reduce the risk of spread as it lowers the number of different people who are interacting.

## Fully Vaccinated People

On April 2, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated its Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People. Vaccines are effective at protecting people from getting sick, and as such, people who have been fully vaccinated can begin doing certain activities that previously posed greater risk. However, fully vaccinated people should continue to maintain and follow all necessary precautions in this Guidance, including wearing of masks, maintaining physical distance and avoiding crowds indoors, especially when mixing with others who are not fully vaccinated. Refer to CDPH Guidance for Fully Vaccinated Persons for definitions and other recommendations, including what to do when experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.

## Recommendations & Mandatory Requirements for All Gatherings

All persons planning to host or participate in a gathering, as defined above, must comply with the requirements identified below and are strongly encouraged to follow the recommendations as well. Activities protected by the First Amendment may proceed under this guidance notwithstanding any guidance, orders, or directives to the contrary.

Keep the households that you interact with stable over time. By spending time with the same people, risk of transmission is reduced. Participating in multiple gatherings with different households or groups is strongly discouraged.

Local health jurisdictions may be more restrictive than this guidance. Refer to your local guidance for what is allowed in your area.

### Across all Tiers:

- Refer to CDPH Guidance for Fully Vaccinated Persons for restrictions on gatherings involving fully vaccinated persons.
- For gatherings that may involve performances, refer to CDPH Guidance for Indoor and Outdoor Live Events and Performances.

## 1. Attendance

Attendance at all gatherings shall be limited according to the County Risk Level. For the most updated information on county status, visit [Blueprint for a Safer Economy](#).

Please note that local health departments can be more restrictive.

### Purple – Widespread – Tier 1:

- Only outdoor gatherings are permitted. The gathering shall be limited to no more than 3 households. This includes everyone present, including host(s) and guests.

### Red – Substantial – Tier 2:

- Outdoor gatherings:
  - Maximum of 25 people
- Indoor gatherings are strongly discouraged

- Maximum 25% capacity where capacity limits exist and up to 3 households or 10 people.

**Orange – Moderate – Tier 3:**

- Outdoor gatherings:
  - Maximum of 50 people
- Indoor gatherings are strongly discouraged
  - Maximum 25% capacity where capacity limits exist or 25 people, whichever is fewer.

**Yellow – Minimal – Tier 4 :**

- Outdoor gatherings:
  - Maximum of 100 people
- Indoor gatherings are strongly discouraged
  - Maximum 50% capacity where capacity limits exist or 50 people, whichever is fewer.

**2. Location:**

- Gatherings that occur outdoors are significantly safer than indoor gatherings. All gatherings must be held outside in the Purple Tier. Indoor gatherings are strongly discouraged but may occur according to the limits defined above.
- If gathering indoors, increase fresh air circulation by opening windows or doors, as much as possible, especially in the rooms where people are gathering.
- If multiple gatherings are occurring, mixing between groups gathering is not allowed. Additionally, multiple unique gatherings cannot be jointly organized or coordinated to occur in the same public park or other outdoor space at the same time, as this would constitute a gathering exceeding the permitted limits.

**3. Food and Drink**

- Because a mask must be lowered or removed, eating or drinking increases the risk of COVID-19 spread, especially when gatherings include people that are not fully vaccinated.
- Food and drink should be limited to outdoors.
- Food and drink indoors is strongly discouraged.
- While face coverings are removed for eating or drinking, individuals must stay at least 6 feet away from everyone outside their own household, and put their face covering back on as soon as they are done with the activity.
- Food and beverages should be served by a person who washes or sanitizes their hands frequently, and who must wear a face covering.
- Remind all persons to sanitize hands before eating or drinking, and after touching shared items if shared items are unavoidable.
- When persons are not able to consume food and drink outdoors, windows and doors should remain open as much as possible to provide good air circulation and ventilation

## 4. Don't Attend Gatherings If You Feel Sick

- Anyone with any COVID-19-like symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, night sweats, sore throat, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, tiredness, muscle or body aches, headaches, confusion, or loss of sense of taste/smell), must stay home and avoid contact with anyone outside their household.
- Anyone who develops COVID-19 within 48 hours after attending a gathering should notify the organizer of the gathering and/or other attendees as soon as possible.

## 5. Individuals in a High-Risk Group are Discouraged from Attending any Gatherings

- People at higher risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19 (such as older adults and people with chronic medical conditions) are strongly urged not to attend any gatherings, especially indoor gatherings.
- If higher-risk individuals do attend any gatherings, they should do the following to decrease the risk for exposure:
  - Spend as much time outside, or near outside air flow such as open windows or doors, as possible.
  - Wear a respirator or surgical mask, or a cloth mask with multiple layers, and minimize any time at the event with the mask off.
  - Remain at least six feet, or ideally even farther away, from others outside their household as much as possible, especially when people are eating or drinking without face coverings.
  - Spend a shorter time at the gathering than others to reduce potential exposure.

## 6. Practice Physical Distancing and Hand Hygiene at Gatherings

- For any gatherings permitted under this guidance that include households with people who are not fully vaccinated, the space must be large enough so that everyone at a gathering can maintain at least 6-feet of physical distance from others (not including their own household) at all times.
- Seating must provide at least 6 feet of distance (in all directions—front-to-back and side-to-side) between different households, if not all households are fully vaccinated.
- Everyone at a gathering should frequently wash their hands with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Shared items should be minimized during a gathering.

## 7. Wear a Face Covering to Keep COVID-19 from Spreading

- When gathering, **face coverings must be worn** in accordance with the CDPH Guidance on the Use of Face Coverings, unless an exemption is applicable.
- People at gatherings are advised to limit removal of their face coverings to when they are actively eating or drinking.
- Face coverings can also be removed to meet urgent medical needs (for example, to use an asthma inhaler, take medication, or if feeling light-headed).

## 8. Keep it short

- Gatherings should be two hours or less. The longer the duration, the risk of transmission increases.

## 9. Singing, Chanting, Shouting, Cheering and Similar Activities Are Strongly Discouraged

- Singing, chanting, shouting, cheering, physical exertion, and similar activities significantly increase the risk of COVID-19 transmission because these activities increase the release of respiratory droplets and fine aerosols into the air. Because of this, singing, chanting, shouting, cheering, and similar activities are strongly discouraged in all settings, but if they occur, the following rules and recommendations apply:
  - All people who are singing, chanting, shouting, cheering, or engaging in similar activities should wear a face covering at all times while engaging in those activities, including anyone who is leading a song, chant, or cheer. Because these activities pose a very high risk of COVID-19 transmission, face coverings are essential to reduce the spread of respiratory droplets and fine aerosols;
  - People who are singing, shouting, chanting, cheering, or exercising are strongly encouraged to maintain physical distancing of more than 6 feet from others to further reduce risk.
  - People who are singing or chanting are strongly encouraged to do so quietly (at or below the volume of a normal speaking voice).
  - Playing of wind instruments (any instrument played by the mouth, such as a trumpet or clarinet) is strongly discouraged, and if played should use protective or tightly woven cloth barriers on the instrument bells or at the end of the instrument to protect from spread of condensation droplets. If music is played, it is recommended that the volume be quiet enough that attendees can speak in a normal voice without shouting.

[1] The limits on religious gatherings enjoined by the United States Supreme Court in *Tandon v. Newsom*, 593 U.S. \_\_\_\_ (2021), will not be enforced.

[2] See, e.g., Hiroshi Nishiura, et al., Closed environments facilitate secondary transmission of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), available at <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.02.28.20029272v2.full.pdf>, Hu Qian, et al., "Indoor transmission of SARS-CoV-2" [pre-print] published in medRxiv on April 4, 2020, available at <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.04.04.20053058v1>.

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California Department of Public Health  
PO Box, 997377, MS 0500, Sacramento, CA 95899-7377  
Department Website ([cdph.ca.gov](https://www.cdph.ca.gov))

