

Survey: Americans likely to attend large holiday gatherings despite COVID-19

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The West family shares a holiday meal with family members through video chat. Experts say that although celebrations will look different this year, there are still opportunities to make treasured memories with loved ones while preventing the spread of COVID-19. Credit: All multimedia is available for free and unrestricted media use with courtesy to The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center

A new national survey by The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center finds that although a majority of Americans plan to take precautions at holiday gatherings, such as social distancing and asking those with COVID symptoms not to attend, many will also put themselves at risk. Nearly two in five report they will likely attend a gathering with more than 10 people and a third will not ask guests to wear masks.

This holiday season comes with a lot of worry and stress as families try to find ways to balance their desire to celebrate together with the risk of spreading COVID-19. While cases of the virus remain high, colder weather across the country is forcing gatherings indoors, where the virus can more easily spread.

"We're going to look back at what happened during this [holiday season](#) and ask ourselves, 'Were we part of the solution or were we part of the problem?'" said Dr. Iahn Gonsenhauser, chief quality and patient safety officer at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center. "When you're gathered together around the table, engaged in conversation, sitting less than six feet apart with your masks down, even in a small group, that's when the spread of this virus can really happen."

Gonsenhauser says the safest solution is the one that people don't want to hear: find ways to communicate virtually and cancel in-person plans. However, if you do decide to have guests, it's important to have a plan in place and to communicate that plan to everyone attending. Consider wearing masks at all times, separating seating arrangements by household and assigning one or two people to serve the food. If you're moving your [holiday](#) plans outdoors, make sure to follow the same precautions you would indoors. And if you plan to travel or welcome out-of-town guests, stay informed about the COVID-19 rates and restrictions in both locations.



Kids at a family gathering play a game together while wearing masks. A new survey by The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center finds nearly two in five

Americans will likely attend a gathering of more than 10 people this holiday season. Credit: The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center

"If you have someone in your household who's high risk and you're in a low incidence area, you're going to want to think twice about having a celebration where people are coming from an area where there's a lot of [virus](#) in the community," Gonsenhauser said.

While celebrations will certainly look different this year, Gonsenhauser says it can also be an opportunity to make treasured memories with loved ones and experiment with new traditions. Try a virtual dinner or gift exchange or drop off surprise treats on friends' and family members' door steps.

More information: wexnermedical.osu.edu

Provided by The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center

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