

MEDIA RELEASE

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Contact: Kristin Prelipp, Communications Manager and Public Information Officer
kprelipp@orangecountync.gov or 919-245-2462

LINK TO MEDIA RELEASE

Orange County Health Department Offers Guidance on Safer Holiday Breaks

HILLSBOROUGH, N.C. Nov. 9, 2020 — Any scenario in which people gather together poses a risk for COVID-19 transmission. The Orange County Health Department offers information on how to gather more safely during the holidays, including guidance for students leaving college campuses and others traveling.

“We encourage hosts and guests of private gatherings to follow this guidance so we can all help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our community,” said Orange County Health Director Quintana Stewart.

A [COVID-19 Clusters in North Carolina report](#) shows trends of increasing clusters from social and community gatherings. A cluster is defined as a minimum of five cases with a common epidemiological link.

“Staying connected with friends and family during the holidays is incredibly important for all of our well-being,” Stewart said. “But this year it will be safer to stay connected via telephone or video chat. We want people to keep in mind that the best gift you can give is the gift of health this holiday season.”

Main Ways to Decrease Risk

The best ways to reduce your risk of viral transmission is to:

- Limit travel during the holidays.
- Limit physical contact with people who do not live in your household.

Whenever gathering with anyone outside your household, you should remember the 3Ws:

- Wear a face covering.
- Wait 6 feet apart or maintain 6 feet of social distancing.
- Wash hands well.

The 3Ws are even more important if you are getting together with someone at [high risk](#) of complications with COVID-19.

Travel and Leaving Campus

The following guidance is for anyone traveling or planning to be with family members they do not live. This includes college students who may be returning home or visiting others during the holidays.

- Get a screening COVID-19 test prior to travel or attending family gatherings. If you have a screening test, note:
 - A negative test result only gives you information for that point in time. It does not mean you will remain negative after the test.
 - Screening tests may miss some infections, particularly if done using rapid or “point of care” tests.
 - Even if you have a negative test result, you should wear a mask, physically distance, avoid crowds and indoor crowded places, wash your hands frequently, monitor yourself for symptoms, and minimize contact with people at high risk of complications of COVID-19.
- Avoid contact with people outside your household for 14 days before traveling or gathering. See the quarantining and isolating criteria below.
 - **Quarantining for Widespread Transmission:** If you are leaving a campus or county that is experiencing widespread transmission or has clusters of COVID-19 cases, you should quarantine for 14 days and monitor your health for [symptoms of COVID-19](#) prior to leaving the area or upon arrival to your destination.
 - **Quarantining for Symptomatic Individuals:** If you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 you should quarantine and get tested. You can contact your health care provider to get tested or locate a testing site using [Find My Testing Place](#). If you test positive, you should follow the isolation criteria below.
 - **Quarantining for Known Exposure:** If you have been identified as a close contact to a known positive case, you should quarantine and get tested for COVID-19. If you test positive and/or develop symptoms, follow the isolation criteria for symptomatic or asymptomatic individuals described below. Even if you test negative and do not develop symptoms, you should remain in quarantine for 14 days after your last known exposure.
 - **Isolation for Symptomatic Individuals:** If you are diagnosed with COVID-19 and have symptoms, or are presumed positive by a medical professional due to symptoms, you should isolate until all of the following conditions are met:
 - You have no fever for at least 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medicine).
 - Your other symptoms have improved (such as coughing or shortness of breath).
 - At least 10 days have passed since your symptoms began.
- **Isolation for Asymptomatic Individuals:** If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 but do not have symptoms, you should isolate until 10 days have passed since the

date of your first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test. If you develop symptoms, follow the isolation criteria for symptomatic individuals described above.

Quarantine keeps someone who might have been exposed to the virus away from others. When quarantining, you should stay home, separate from others, monitor your health, and follow directions from the state or local health department.

Isolation keeps someone who is infected with the virus away from others, even in their home. When isolating, you should stay home and separate yourself from others in your home by staying in a specific “sick room” or area and using a separate bathroom if available.

Basic Guidelines for Gathering

Do not host or attend a gathering if experiencing any of the following:

- You have been diagnosed with COVID-19.
- You are waiting for COVID-19 test results.
- You are experiencing [symptoms](#) of COVID-19.
- You have been told by the local health department to quarantine or isolate.
- You may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19.

Gatherings should not exceed North Carolina’s current mass gathering limits of 10 people indoors and 50 people outdoors. Outdoor activities are preferred over indoor because it is easier to stay apart and there is more wind and air to help reduce the spread of the virus.

If you are planning in-person holiday gatherings with people who do not live in your household:

- Consider asking all guests to strictly avoid contact with people outside of their households for 14 days before the gathering.
- Remind invited guests to stay home if they have been exposed to COVID-19 in the last 14 days or are showing COVID-19 symptoms.
- Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces (such as door handles, sink handles and bathroom surfaces) before guests come over and between uses.
- Keep the guest list small. When deciding how many people to invite, consider the amount of space you have and the ability to maintain social distancing during the event.
- Higher risk guests should consider attending events virtually, so they can remain safely at home.
- If higher risk individuals attend gatherings in person, ensure the 3Ws are practiced by all guests and limit the number of other guests in attendance as much as possible.
- All guests should screen for symptoms the day before the event and stay home from the event if they are not feeling well.

SlowCOVIDNC App

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services has launched a COVID-19 Exposure Notification app called ‘SlowCOVIDNC’. The app will help North Carolinians slow the

spread of the virus by alerting them when they may have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. It is completely anonymous and does not collect, store or share personal information or location data.

To learn more about SlowCOVIDNC and to download the app, visit <https://www.covid19.ncdhhs.gov/slowcovidnc>, which also includes an [FAQ](#).

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