



COVID-19 Guidance for Safer Spring and Summer Gatherings

Background

Southwest District Health (SWDH) recognizes the great significance of tradition and celebration when it comes to holidays and milestones, and the desire to host or attend activities, like those that often come during the spring and summer months. However, as we continue to seek ways to balance life amidst an ongoing pandemic and increasing detection of virus variants, health and safety should continue to be at the forefront. Though vaccination for COVID-19 does reduce our chances of exposure and illness, SWDH wants its communities to be aware that many traditional activities, in-person gatherings with people outside of your household, and travel to areas outside of your local area can increase your risk for exposure to COVID-19.

As of May 11, 2021, Idaho moved to Stage 4 of the Idaho Rebounds stages of reopening plan and the [Stage 4 Stay Healthy Guidelines](#) are available for reference. [As per the current stage](#), there are no recommended limitations on gathering sizes. If you are fully vaccinated¹, you can attend gatherings, both public and private, without wearing masks or maintain physical distance. If you are unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated, you should adhere to mask wearing, physical distancing and sanitation practices as [per the guidance from CDC](#).

This guidance is intended for those who are planning to host or attend a large gathering such as a sporting event, wedding, barbecue, fundraiser, performance, school dance, graduation party, or other get-together.

If you do not feel well, have a respiratory or gastrointestinal illness, or may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, you should not host or attend in-person gatherings.

¹ In general, people are considered fully vaccinated:

- 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series, such as the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or
- 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine

If you don't meet these requirements, regardless of your age, you are NOT fully vaccinated. Keep taking all [precautions](#) until you are fully vaccinated.

This document was updated 05/13/2021 using information and guidance available to-date and is subject to change per emerging guidance.



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GATHERINGS & RISK FACTORS TO CONSIDER

Several factors can contribute to the likelihood of attendees being exposed to or spreading COVID-19 at large events. In combination with the following factors will create higher or lower amounts of risk:

- **Number of COVID-19 cases in your community.** High or increasing levels of COVID-19 cases in the event location or the locations the attendees are coming from increase the risk of infection and spread among attendees.
- **Exposure during travel.** Airports, airplanes, bus stations, buses, train stations, trains, public transport, gas stations, and rest stops are all places where physical distancing may be challenging, and ventilation may be poor.
- **Setting of the event.** Indoor events, especially in places with poor ventilation, pose more risk than outdoor events.
- **Length of the event.** Events that last longer pose more risk than shorter events.
- **Number and crowding of people at the event.** Events with more people increase the likelihood of being exposed.
- **Behavior of attendees during an event.** Events where people engage in behaviors such as interacting with others from outside their own household, singing, shouting, not maintaining physical distancing, or not wearing masks consistently and correctly, can increase risk.

PLANNING OR HOSTING A LARGE GATHERING

If you choose to plan a gathering that will bring together people from different households, public health asks you to consider the following safety measures.

As per Stage 4 of the Idaho Rebounds plan, there are no recommended limitations on gathering sizes. Gatherings, both public and private, should adhere to physical distancing and sanitation guidelines. Event organizers and planners should have their safe operation plan available during the event. Event organizers and planners are encouraged to make their plans available to the public. Gatherings and events should use to the Idaho Rebounds protocols for safe gatherings and events for their plans to operate, available at <https://rebound.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/stage4-stay-healthy-guidelines-051121.pdf>.

Gathering Size

- Consider the most vulnerable attendees/family members when planning; utilize the [CDC's recommendations for hosting gatherings or cookouts](#)
- Consider offering a virtual attendance option instead of in-person, for all or part of your event to allow more people to be a part of the experience.
- When deciding how many people to invite to the gathering, consider the amount of space you

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have and the ability to maintain social distancing during the event

- The following calculator tool can be used to estimate the maximum number of people per square footage: [Social Distancing Calculator](#)

Health & Safety

- Consider ways to reduce the number of people congregating in potentially close spaces, like a kitchen, when cooking or during clean up
- Practice infection prevention measures as appropriate – use CDC’s guidance for [choosing safer activities](#), which outlines activities and associated risk levels for vaccinated and unvaccinated people
- Remind attendees to regularly wash hands or use hand sanitizer; place in easy to access places at your venue
- Discourage greeting others with physical contact (e.g., handshakes)
- Use reminder signs about frequent hand hygiene and physical distancing; consider regular announcements to attendees as reminders
- Consider using paper goods that can be disposed of
- Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces frequently and any shared items between use; develop a schedule for increased, routine cleaning. When choosing disinfectants, use products from [EPA-approved disinfectants](#) against COVID-19.
- Consider using touchless options for ticketing, sales, or other monetary transactions
- If having an indoor gathering, improve ventilation by opening doors and windows as much as possible; keep in mind that while outdoor activities are safer than indoor activities, the virus can still spread outdoors
- Anyone invited or associated with the gathering or event that does not feel well, has recently been around someone with COVID-19, or is awaiting a test result, should not attend or help with the gathering
- Ensure that any vendors or people who will be helping with the gathering understand this expectation
- Consider developing flexible refund policies for attendees for events that involve a participation fee
- Maintain contact information of attendees

Food Service

- Currently, there is no evidence to suggest that handling food or eating is associated with directly spreading COVID-19. However, people sharing utensils and congregating around food service areas can pose a risk. Limit food or beverage service in areas in which people are more likely to congregate as that may encourage unmasked interactions.
- Use touchless payment options as much as possible, if available.

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- Ask customers and staff to exchange cash or card payments by placing them on a receipt tray or on the counter rather than by hand to avoid direct hand-to-hand contact.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as pens, counters, or hard surfaces between use and encourage patrons to use their own pens.
- Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to ensure that people remain at least 6 feet apart when waiting in line to order or pick up.
- If a cafeteria or group dining room is used, serve individually plated meals or grab-and-go options, and hold activities in separate areas.
- Use disposable food service items including utensils and dishes. If disposable items are not feasible or desirable, ensure that all non-disposable food service items are handled with gloves and washed with dish soap and hot water or in a dishwasher.
- People should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after removing their gloves or after directly handling used food service items.
- Avoid offering any self-serve food or drink options, such as buffets, salad bars, and drink stations. Consider having pre-packaged boxes or bags for each attendee.

ATTENDING AND/OR TRAVELING TO AN EVENT

- Use CDC's guidance for [choosing safer activities](#), which outlines activities and associated risk levels for vaccinated and unvaccinated people
- Avoid singing, chanting, or shouting, especially when not wearing a mask and within 6 feet of others
- If you or anyone in your household does not feel well, has recently been around someone with COVID-19, or is awaiting a test result, do not attend the gathering

CONSIDERATIONS FOR EVERYONE

- Get your COVID-19 vaccine; anyone 12 years and older in Idaho is now eligible for the free and effective vaccine
- Consistently follow any local or state public health orders or advisories in place
- Consider attending an event or gathering virtually if it's an option
- Wear face masks, maintain physical distancing as recommended by CDC. If you are fully vaccinated, you can resume activities without wearing a mask or staying 6 feet apart. Follow [CDC guidance](#) to assess your risk of exposure depending on vaccination status and preventive strategies to be followed to protect yourself and others.
- Stay home if you are sick
- Wash your hands often
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Disinfect surfaces and objects regularly

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- Take time to care for your mental health – [seek free resources and reach out to others](#)

Resources for Use + More Information:

- o SWDH COVID-19 Directory: <https://phd3.idaho.gov/covid19/>
- o Idaho Rebounds Website: <https://rebound.idaho.gov/stages-of-reopening/>
- o Idaho Coronavirus Website: <https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/>
- o CDC – Guidance for Organizing Large Events and Gatherings: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/considerations-for-events-gatherings.html>
- o Mental Health Resources in Idaho: <https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/behavioral-health/>
- o Mental Health Support – find help and ideas in English & Spanish: <https://howrightnow.org/>