



Public Health Division

County of Santa Cruz

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STATE RELEASES NEW GUIDANCE FOR PRIVATE GATHERINGS

Santa Cruz County, Calif. – With the holiday season approaching, the California Department of Public Health has released updated guidance on private gatherings, including backyard barbecues, public get-togethers and birthday parties and other celebrations.

For gatherings not covered by separate guidance (such as churches or protests), no more than three households may gather together in public or private outdoor settings. Gatherings are defined as social situations that bring together people from different households at the same time in a single space or place. If a gathering is held, the host should collect the names of all attendees for contact tracing purposes.

“Although any interaction with others increases the risk of transmitting COVID-19, the smaller the gathering, the lower the risk,” stated Jennifer Herrera, Chief of Public Health. “The new guidance recommends keeping the households you gather with stable over time.”

Some of the [mandatory requirements](#) listed in the guidance are:

- The gatherings must take place outdoors. Guests may enter a home to use a bathroom.
- Gatherings should be two hours or less. The longer the duration, the risk of transmission increases.
- Face coverings must be worn in accordance with the CDPH [Guidance on the Use of Face Coverings](#) (PDF) unless an exemption is applicable.
- Seating must provide at least 6 feet of distance (in all directions—front-to-back and side-to-side) between different households.
- Keep the households you interact with stable over time.

Those in a high-risk group, such as older adults and people with chronic medical conditions, are strongly urged not to attend gatherings. Those with COVID-19-like symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath or loss of sense of taste/smell, should stay home and avoid contact with anyone outside their household.

In addition, anyone who develops COVID-19 within 48 hours after attending a gathering should notify the other attendees as soon as possible regarding the potential exposure.

Participating in multiple gatherings with different households or groups is still strongly discouraged.