

Thanksgiving: Risky Business

As we near Thanksgiving and our “pandemic fatigue” increases, it may feel safe to join family and friends for the holiday. Unfortunately, COVID-19 rates are increasing, both in Arizona and nationwide.

Unfortunately, small family gatherings have been identified as a key source of COVID-19 transmission. We tend to let our guard down around people we love, and dealing with COVID-19 is no different.

If you do decide to gather in person, here are some harm reduction tips. They help minimize risk, but do not eliminate it. The only truly safe approach is to avoid gathering in person at all.

Why is Thanksgiving so risky? Covid-19 circulation increases when people spend a lot of time together indoors, talking, eating, and drinking. Risk increases further when people from different households gather.

Known safety measure focus on *decreasing* the number of people who gather, *decreasing* time spent together, and *decreasing* close contact.

Before the Event

- **Self-Isolate:** Ask guests to minimize their activities and opportunities for exposure for two weeks prior to gathering.
- **Get Tested:** Ask guests to get tested a few days before the event. Tests are accessible and covered by insurance. Both Embry Women’s Clinics and Walgreen’s sites are throughout the valley, and can provide results in 36-48 hours. Remember to self-isolate as much as possible after your test, to prevent catching it afterwards.
- **Guest List:** Keep it small – the fewer people from fewer households, the better. Do the other guests share your concerns about COVID-19? Is everyone comfortable telling others if they wake up feeling sick the morning of?

During the Event

- **Move the dinner outside:** Take advantage of Phoenix weather by moving your celebration outdoors. Increasing air circulation is key in reducing risk.
- **Social Distance:** Keep six feet apart to minimize spread.
- **Reduce the time you spend together:** Can you shorten the celebration?
- **Wear masks during downtime:** All guests should wear a mask when not eating.
- **Don’t share serving utensils and other items**

Lower risk activities

- Having a small dinner with only people who live in your household
- Preparing traditional family recipes for family and neighbors, especially those at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, and delivering them in a way that doesn't involve contact with others
- Having a virtual dinner and sharing recipes with friends and family
- Shopping online rather than in person
- Watching sports events, parades, and movies from home

Moderate risk activities

- Having a small outdoor dinner with local family & friends
- Visiting pumpkin patches or orchards where people use hand sanitizer before touching pumpkins or picking apples, wearing masks is encouraged or enforced, and people are able to maintain social distancing
- Attending a small outdoor sports events with safety precautions in place

Higher risk activities

- Going shopping in crowded stores just before, on, or after Thanksgiving
- Participating or being a spectator at a crowded race
- Attending crowded parades
- Attending large indoor gatherings with people from outside of your household

Traditional Thanksgiving Alternatives

- Residents may make reservations for Thanksgiving Dinner at Buckwald's from 11AM-2PM or the Bistro from 2PM-7PM for parties of up to four.
 - If you choose to dine with other residents outside of your household, please ensure you have spoken with them about their possible COVID exposure over the past two weeks. Have they visited with others in the last 14 days? Did they social distance and wear masks the entire time? Consider the risks carefully.
 - No off-campus guests may dine at the Bistro or Buckwald's on Thanksgiving Day.
 - Buckwald's will offer buffet service from 11-2PM, during which Dining Services will put your selections on the plate for you.
 - Residents must wear their masks whenever leaving the table and approaching the buffet.
- Dining Services will also deliver Thanksgiving meals to residents' apartments.
- Consider sharing a meal virtually by connecting with friends and family over Zoom or by phone this Thanksgiving.
- Families can also drop off a Thanksgiving meal for loved ones at Beatitudes who feel more comfortable staying at home this year.