

Mayo Clinic experts urge 'household holiday': Keep Thanksgiving gathering to a minimum

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As the number of reported COVID-19 cases continue to rise, Mayo Clinic experts urge the public to follow Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention (CDC) guidelines this Thanksgiving.

"The guidance right now is to keep your party at your family nucleus—immediate family—and really try to use other ways to celebrate the holidays through Zoom or other venues," says Dr. Elie Berbari, chair of the Division of Infectious Diseases at Mayo Clinic. "And if you work together, wearing a mask and limiting the group is so important."

The safest way to celebrate Thanksgiving is to celebrate at home with people in your household. These efforts reduce the risk of spreading or contracting COVID.

What are some of the Mayo Clinic experts doing differently this year?

Dr. Melanie Swift, Occupational Medicine: "We have a very small family. My only close relative is my sister. This will be the first year that we aren't together in the same kitchen around the same table for Thanksgiving. We talked about this and feel we really need to be careful. Distance doesn't change our relationship. It doesn't change the love we have for each other. We're going to get on Zoom, and we're going to talk. She's going to have her meal that she's preparing, and we're going to have ours. We're going to have a quiet holiday being thankful for the light at the end of the tunnel to this pandemic and being thankful for each other. We've been in this together. And now we're going to pull through this together."

Dr. Craig Sawchuk, a Mayo Clinic psychologist: "Ordinarily, we would travel around. We would visit some of our family in Wisconsin. But this year, we have all agreed not to do this. What we're planning on doing is celebrating ourselves but then spending time and making sure that during the day that we have those virtual get-togethers, as well."

Dr. Matt Callstrom, Mayo Clinic radiologist: "Normally, when we would have Thanksgiving, we would probably have more than 20 people together. It's an important event for our family, but this year, we are not doing it. We're going to have just our immediate [family](#)—those who we know have been very careful together—and then we're going to be careful when we're together."

It's important to wear a mask and to continue to socially distance in an effort to reduce the likelihood of contracting or spreading the virus, says Dr. Richard Oeckler, director of the medical/COVID-19 ICU at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota.

"Please, I know the Thanksgiving holiday and other holidays are coming up, and I'm just hopeful that everybody can stay safe," says Dr. Oeckler. "And if you can, please do that virtually as best you can. It's not ideal, but I think it'll help us get back to normalcy as soon as possible."

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