

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Doug Bolnick, Public Information Officer, 636-949-7408

St. Charles County Public Health Issues Recommendations for Reducing Illness at Holiday Gatherings

ST. CHARLES COUNTY, MO – Because incidences of COVID-19 and other illnesses continue to grow, many are seeking safer ways to celebrate family traditions during fall and winter holidays. To aid in this planning, the St. Charles County Department of Public Health joins the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and others in issuing recommendations focused on staying healthy during the holiday season.

“Gathering together and celebrating with family are at the heart of most holiday traditions,” Department of Public Health Director Demetrius Cianci-Chapman says. “However, as contact tracing links a growing number of COVID-19 cases to family get-togethers and community gatherings, we must take steps to protect those at the highest risk for serious complications when we celebrate. We urge members of our community to take personal responsibility to help reduce the spread of illness by minimizing close contacts, wearing a mask or face covering when interacting with those outside their immediate household, washing hands and surfaces regularly and staying home if they feel sick or have been exposed.”

Tips for Reducing the Spread of Illness during Holiday Gatherings

The Department of Public Health recommends the following preventative actions this holiday season:

- Wearing masks or other face coverings when interacting with others outside your immediate household, including extended family, friends and members of the community.
- Washing hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water or hand sanitizer and disinfecting commonly touched surfaces regularly.
- Gathering with your immediate family or a small group of individuals. Shorten the duration of these events and arrange spacing between seating to lessen the risk for exposure.
- Hosting or attending outdoor activities with social distancing and mask wearing enforced. For indoor events, open windows or take other steps to improve ventilation as a means for diffusing the virus.
- Serving plated meals, instead of buffets, to reduce the handling of potentially contaminated utensils and dishware.
- If traveling, drive to your destination and self-quarantine for several days prior to departure/after your return to reduce the risk for exposure.
- Receiving a flu vaccination at least two weeks prior to your event.
- Any individual who is sick, is experiencing COVID-19 or flu-like symptoms, is awaiting test results, or may have been exposed to illness should stay home and avoid contact with others.

Since the virus that causes COVID-19 is spread person-to-person, the safest activities involve reducing exposure with others. Here are a few lower-risk alternatives to holiday favorites:

- Preparing traditional family recipes for those within your household or delivering holiday treats in a way that avoids contact with others.
- Continuing traditional family activities like watching sports, movies or parades, playing family games and caroling through virtual connections.
- Shopping online and scheduling delivery of food/packages to your home.
- Touring holiday light displays with members of your household in your personal vehicle.
- Mailing hand-written notes, calling loved ones or creating virtual holiday cards for friends and family.
- Contacting your favorite charity to discuss volunteer/donation options, instead of planning in-person activities.

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About the St. Charles County Department of Public Health

Through the efforts of its three divisions — Environmental Health and Protection, Health Services and Humane Services — the St. Charles County Department of Public Health provides a wide range of services that enhance the well-being of the community. To learn how the department assists this region or to find out about volunteer opportunities with any of the divisions, visit sccmo.org/PublicHealth or call 636-949-7400.

About St. Charles County

Founded in 1812, St. Charles County is one of the fastest growing counties in Missouri, and the state's third largest county in both population and economic share. It is home to 15 scenic county parks encompassing more than 3,643 acres with additional land under development and more in reserve for future development.

With a population of 395,504, St Charles County is home to large employers including General Motors, Citi, MasterCard Worldwide and Boeing. It is ranked among the top 25 counties in the nation in high-tech job growth by the Progressive Policy Institute and consistently has the lowest unemployment rate in the Metropolitan St. Louis area.

St. Charles County Government employs nearly 1,100 in more than 30 departments and offices, who work to make the county an excellent place to live, work and shop. For more information, please visit sccmo.org.