

## How to host a COVID-safe holiday gathering: Suggested talking points

- **Encourage everyone to take a rapid test before gathering.**
  - In the week leading up to the event, consider asking people to wear an N95 mask in public and limit social activities as much as possible to reduce the chance of getting infected.
  - Guests may also want to stock up on their [eight free COVID-19 tests](#) for the month.
  - On the day of the event, consider taking a rapid test right before gathering. If it comes back positive, you are most likely infectious and should stay home.
  - Guests who are experiencing symptoms should also stay home, even if they receive a negative rapid test. COVID-19 is not the only infectious disease of concern—flu and RSV are in high circulation this fall.
- **Use ventilation and filtration tools to reduce indoor COVID-19 transmission.**
  - Both ventilation and filtration help [improve indoor air quality](#). Ventilation moves outdoor air into a space while filtration removes unwanted particles from the air.
  - Open the windows to improve ventilation. To increase airflow, set up a fan in front of the window, facing outward, or turn on exhaust fans in the house.
  - Consider building an affordable Corsi-Rosenthal box to filter air in the main gathering room. You can find instructions [here](#) in English and Spanish.
  - HEPA air purifiers are another, more expensive filtration option. [This air purifier](#) is a popular option, and [this one](#) is recommended for larger rooms.
- **Be considerate of guests who are immunocompromised or at high risk.**
  - For many people, it may feel like the pandemic is over. But immunocompromised and high-risk individuals often cannot afford to abandon precautions and risk infection.
  - In order to prioritize everyone's health and safety, consider limiting the event to people who have received their flu shot and COVID-19 vaccines, preferably including an updated booster.
  - Try to keep children under 6 months away from guests since they cannot get vaccinated for COVID-19 yet and are also at high risk of severe illness from flu and RSV.
  - Maximize ventilation and filtration to reduce the risk of transmission indoors.
  - Take advantage of N95 masks and social distancing if needed, even though it may be awkward. The goal is to enjoy the festivities and return home safe and healthy.

## How to host a COVID-safe holiday gathering: Frequently asked questions

### 1. How can guests use rapid tests effectively before gathering?

Take a test right before gathering to check if you have COVID-19. If you test positive, you are likely infectious and should stay home. If you test negative but are experiencing symptoms, it's safest to stay home because rapid tests do not detect all COVID-19 infections and you could also be sick with another infectious disease such as flu or RSV. If you test negative and do not have symptoms, you are safe to gather. For people who have enough tests and want to be extra safe, you can test throughout the week leading up to the event. Taking two tests 48 hours apart [reduces the risk of getting a false negative](#). If you were exposed but have no symptoms, take three tests, each 48 hours apart.

### 2. How can I reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 indoors?

Ventilation and filtration are both key to reducing indoor COVID-19 transmission. Ventilation moves outdoor air into a space while filtration removes unwanted particles from the air. Opening the windows is a simple but powerful way to improve ventilation. You can further increase airflow by setting up a fan in front of the window, facing outward. In terms of filtration, there are several tools you can use. Corsi-Rosenthal boxes are cost-effective air filtration tools that you can build yourself. You can find instructions in English and Spanish [here](#) for building this DIY air filter. HEPA air purifiers are another filtration tool and are known for their ability to remove [more than 99 percent](#) of particles with a diameter of 0.3 microns. For context, the droplets and particles that carry COVID-19 viruses are typically at least a few microns in size, so HEPA filters can easily trap them.

### 3. How important are updated COVID-19 boosters?

New studies by both [Pfizer](#) and [Moderna](#) have shown that their updated COVID-19 boosters perform better against the BA.4 and BA.5 Omicron subvariants than the original COVID-19 vaccines do. Although BA.5 now only makes up about 30 percent of circulating COVID-19 viruses in the U.S., the updated boosters are still an important form of additional protection, as they are expected to reduce severe disease. Staying up to date on COVID-19 vaccines is crucial during the holiday season, so get yours as soon as possible if you haven't already.