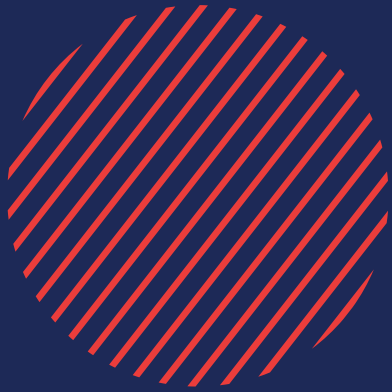




Healthy Holiday Toolkit

2022-2023



Overview



There is much to be thankful for this season as we make strides in the fight against COVID-19, but now we face another threat. Austin Public Health (APH) epidemiologists are monitoring alarming upper respiratory virus trends, specifically children in the hospital. As friends and family get together for holiday celebrations, it is important to consider those who are at increased risk for poor outcomes should they get sick. Get up to date with flu and COVID-19 vaccines, stay home if you feel sick and take preventive measures to minimize the spread of viruses indoors.

Emergency rooms in the area are inundated with patients suffering from upper respiratory illnesses. The flu positivity rate in Travis County is much higher than it usually is at this point in the season. The percentage of visits to health care providers due to flu-like illness has been above 10%—much higher than at this same time the last few years. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends seasonal flu shots for everyone 6 months and older.

“If you haven’t already, please get your seasonal flu shot,” said Dr. Desmar Walkes, Austin-Travis County Health Authority. “If we can limit the prevalence of those viruses in our community, it will help our already short-staffed health care system care for high-risk patients.”

Everyone 6 months and older is eligible for COVID-19 vaccines. More than 71% of those eligible in Travis County have completed their primary COVID-19 vaccination series. Only about 37% have gotten a booster or third dose. The CDC recommends everyone five and older get an updated (bivalent) booster shot. Updated boosters offer broader protection against newer COVID-19 variants including BA.5 which is [predominant in Travis County](#).

Stay home if you’re feeling sick. The likelihood of spreading viruses is heightened during indoor group gatherings. [If you’ve been exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19, the CDC recommends masking and testing at least five days after exposure. [If you have COVID-19](#), stay home and isolate from others for at least five days.

“Family and friends who haven’t seen each other for years because of the pandemic may be getting together for the holidays. While this is a time to celebrate, we can’t let our guard down,” said APH Director Adrienne Sturup. “Continue to follow the lessons we’ve learned to keep yourself and loved ones safe and out of the hospital.”

If you’re hosting guests this holiday season, consider [ways to improve ventilation](#). Ensure it’s easy for visitors to [wash their hands with soap and water](#) or use [hand sanitizers](#). You may also choose to [wear a well-fitting mask](#) to protect yourself and loved ones who may be at [high risk](#) of serious illness.

APH has compiled health and safety messaging for the upcoming holiday season. Please use the following media toolkit and help us share best practices to mitigate the spread of illnesses.



Resources and tools

Social Media Posts



If you're experiencing cold-like symptoms, skip the gatherings and stay home. Take a COVID-19 test or visit a local pharmacy. FREE test kits are available for those who are uninsured or underinsured at APH Neighborhood Centers and Shots for Tots/Big Shots clinics while supplies last. For more information visit bit.ly/3tzeKKu



Get up to date with COVID-19 and flu vaccines before celebrating the holidays with loved ones. Two weeks before is best, and you can get both at the same time. Visit vaccines.gov to find a vaccine provider near you.

Download Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram social media graphics in [English](#), and [Spanish](#).

Social Media Posts



This season, carve out time to get your COVID-19 booster and flu vaccine. You can have both at the same time. It's more convenient, and if you happen to experience side effects, it's one and done. Side effects may include:

- Short-lived tenderness at the injection site
- Headache
- Fatigue
- More rarely, fever

As a best practice, you may use alternating arms for each shot to reduce the tenderness in your arm.



Hosting family and friends this holiday season? Here are some ways to minimize exposure to cold and flu viruses. Try the CDC's Ventilation Quiz to learn more about how to improve air quality: <https://bit.ly/3fPAZsp>



Pass the sides, not the germs.

Social Media Carousels



When to wash your hands with soap and water this season:

- Before, during, and after food prep & eating.
- After handling pet food/treats or touching pets.
- After using the toilet or changing and cleaning up after a child.
- After touching trash.
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick.
- Before and after treating a cut or wound.
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.

City of Austin APH Austin Public Health

Don't let a stomach bug ruin your holidays. Here are the ideal times to wash your hands with soap and water:



Feast your eyes on these tips to prevent food poisoning during the holidays.

- Use a food thermometer to ensure foods have been cooked to a safe internal temperature.
- Keep hot food hot and cold food cold otherwise bacteria can grow rapidly.
- Refrigerate or freeze perishable foods within 2 hours.
- Do not eat raw dough or batter that has flour or eggs.

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Feast your eyes on these tips to prevent food poisoning during the holidays.



Other media



Healthy talks with kids: How we stay safe during cold and flu season_Version 1 [Link](#)



Healthy talks with kids: How we stay safe during cold and flu season_Version 2 [Link](#)

HOSTING FOR THE HOLIDAYS?

Prepare proper ventilation and lower risks of COVID-19 and flu

Air it out

- Bring as much fresh air into your home as possible.
- When possible, open doors and windows as much as you can to bring in fresh, outdoor air. Even having a window cracked open slightly can help. Do not open windows and doors if doing so is unsafe.
- Consider using air filtration and bathroom and stove exhaust fans as an option.

Filter

- In homes where the HVAC fan operation can be controlled by a thermostat, set the fan to the "on" position instead of "auto" when you have visitors.
- Use pleated filters - they are more efficient than ordinary furnace filters.

Put it to the test

Learn how to decrease virus particles during and after gatherings.

Scan this QR code to try an interactive home ventilation tool created by the CDC.

Austin Public Health 11/15/2022

Hosting for the holidays:

Prepare proper ventilation and lower risks of COVID-19 and flu

[Link](#)

Recipe for Safe Holiday Meals

Healthy prep is key to preventing food poisoning

- Wash hands with soap and water.**
You know the drill. At least 20 seconds.
- Keep foods separated.**
Don't let meat mix and mingle with other foods in your grocery cart or in your fridge.
- Cook thoroughly.**
Meat and eggs can carry germs that cause food poisoning. Use a food thermometer to check for a safe internal temperature. Roasts, chops, steaks, and fresh ham should rest for 3 minutes after baking or grilling.
- Avoid the "danger zone"**
Bacteria love the danger zone: 40°F - 135°F After food is prepared, keep hot food hot and cold food cold. Refrigerate or freeze perishable food within 2 hours, or 1 hour if exposed to temperatures above 90°F, such as in a hot car. Your refrigerator should be set at or below 40°F and your freezer at or below 20°F.
- Be careful with eggs.**
Always use pasteurized eggs when making foods that call for raw eggs. Don't eat raw batter or dough made with flour and eggs that's meant to be cooked or baked.
- Thaw turkey.**
Thaw turkey in the refrigerator, in a sink of cold water (change the water every 30 minutes), or in the microwave.
- More handwashing.**
20 seconds!
- Enjoy!**

Austin Public Health 11/15/2022

Recipe for safe holiday meals:

Healthy prep is key to preventing food poisoning

[Link](#)

