

Celebrating the Holidays may be Different this Year

The Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board (NPAIHB) is a non-profit public health agency that works with Tribes in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho to promote community health. Because of Covid-19, this year the NPAIHB strongly recommends gathering **only with the people you live with** or **virtually** this season.

If you know relatives who are planning on gathering, there are ways to make guests safer. Below are suggestions from the CDC and other health agencies that can decrease, *but not eliminate*, the risk of gathering with people you don't live with. Please share them with your friends and relatives.

Taking steps to stop the spread can help save a life!

Making your gatherings safer

Smaller, shorter gatherings are safer. Large groups increase risk. Before gathering, plan ahead to make the events safer. Let everyone know what was agreed upon before the event. Here are some helpful suggestions:

Before the gathering

- Consider the amount of space you have and your ability to maintain social distancing during the event.
- Limit the event to no more than three households and two hours.
- Ask guests to limit contact with people outside their households for at least 10 days before the event.
- Suggest guests have a Covid-19 test three days before the event so they know their results.
- If traveling to the event, ask guests to limit stops along the way.
- If guests are very vulnerable or not feeling well, include them virtually instead of in person.

At the gathering

- Have extra masks for guests who forgot them and always wear masks unless eating or drinking.
- Use separate tables for individual families or people that are in a “bubble” together.
- Have only one or two people, wearing masks and gloves, make up plates in the kitchen and serve guests individually rather than family style.
- Use compostable utensils and plates and do not share drinks, food, utensils, or pipes, etc.
- Ask guests not to shout, sing or dance, which can increase the amount of virus in the air.
- Limit or do not serve alcohol, which can cloud judgement leading to disregarding safety precautions.
- Open windows and turn on a fan to circulate fresh air.
- Appoint a “safety monitor” who can gently remind guest of agreed upon safety practices.

Creating a meaningful gathering

Even with the restrictions imposed by Covid-19, it is still possible to have a meaningful gathering, it just takes some extra creativity and planning. Here are some of our favorites:

- Consider having several smaller gatherings in different households and connect virtually. This way you can connect with people who may live far from you.
- Set places for people unable to attend in person and have a photo of them.
- Gather outside for drumming, singing, or dancing.
- Ask guests to reflect on what they have learned from the pandemic and what they are looking forward to.
- Share stories of resilience.

