



EPI WATCH

Monthly Epidemiology Newsletter



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Disease Reporting
To report diseases and clusters of illness:
Phone: (727) 824-6932
Fax: (727) 484-3865
(excluding HIV/AIDS)

To report HIV/AIDS by mail:
Surveillance Room 3-138
205 Dr. MLK Jr St. N

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Don't bring COVID-19 home for the holidays

As the holiday season approaches, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to worsen in the United States. Small household gatherings have played a significant role in the recent increase in cases. **This year, virtual holiday celebrations pose the least risk of spreading COVID-19 to friends and family.** If you're planning an in-person gathering, there are several factors to consider that can increase or decrease the risk of spreading COVID-19:

- **Community levels of COVID-19**– Increased levels of COVID-19 at the location of the gathering or the locations where attendees are coming from can increase the risk of infection. Review local, state, or Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) websites for information on the number of cases in an area.
- **Travel**– Airports, bus, train or gas stations, rest stops, and public transportation are places where someone could be exposed to the virus. If attendees are traveling to the gathering, this can increase the risk of COVID-19.
- **Location**– Indoor gatherings, especially in small, enclosed spaces with poor ventilation, increase the risk for transmission compared to outdoor gatherings. Hold gatherings outdoors whenever possible.
- **Duration** – Being within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for 15 cumulative minutes or more increases the risk of transmission, so longer gatherings may allow for more exposures.
- **Number of people and proximity**– Larger gatherings and gatherings that do not allow for distancing pose a greater risk of transmission. The size of gatherings should depend on having the space for persons from different households to stay 6 feet apart.
- **Behavior of attendees prior to the gathering**– Persons who did not consistently adhere to social distancing, mask wearing, handwashing, and other prevention behaviors increase the risk of transmission at the gathering.
- **Behavior of attendees during the gathering**- Gatherings with prevention measures in place, including mask wearing, social distancing, and handwashing, decrease the risk of spreading COVID-19.

If you are holding an in-person gathering, put as many prevention measures into place as possible. There is no one measure that will prevent the spread of COVID-19. If you are attending a gathering, ask the host what prevention measures will be in place.

There are some persons who should not attend in-person holiday gatherings under any circumstances, including:

- Persons diagnosed with COVID-19 who have not met the criteria for when it is safe to be around others
- Persons with symptoms of COVID-19
- Persons waiting for the results of a COVID-19 viral test
- Persons who may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days
- Persons at an increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19

For additional information on holding gatherings, please visit the CDC's [Holiday Celebrations and Small Gatherings](#).

Holiday Food Safety Tips

by Whitney Catoe

The holidays are approaching which means more time with family, friends, and food! In addition to COVID-19 prevention measures, it's also important to practice food safety to avoid sending your guests home with the unwanted gift of norovirus, salmonella, or other foodborne illnesses. While preparing your holiday meal, make sure to keep the following in mind:

Food Safety

- **WASH YOUR HANDS!** Hand hygiene is the best way to prevent the spread of illness. Wash your hands for twenty seconds with soap and water before and after cooking, after using the bathroom, after contact with trash, and before eating.
- Don't thaw raw food on the counter. This can allow germs to spread and contaminate surrounding areas.
- Avoid cross-contamination. Keep meats, seafood, and eggs separate from other foods. Wash your hands in between handling raw meats and other foods. Use separate cutting boards and utensils for raw meat and immediately put cookware or dishes no longer in use in the sink or dishwasher.
- Cook all meat thoroughly and utilize a food thermometer to ensure it reaches a safe internal temperature.
- Avoid the consumption of any raw dough or batter, which can cause illnesses like Salmonella or *E. coli*.
- Do not keep food sitting out for more than 2 hours and store food at appropriate temperatures. Refrigerator temperatures should be at or below 40° Fahrenheit and freezer temperatures should be at or below 0° Fahrenheit.
- Do not make food for others while sick. This can contaminate food and cause others to fall ill as well.



Turkey Safety

- Thaw turkey in one of three ways:
 - Refrigerator: Thaw 24 hours for each 4-5 pounds in a refrigerator set below 40° F.
 - Cold Water: Wrap turkey in a leak-proof bag and submerge in cold water. Make sure water is replaced every 30 minutes. The time to thaw will depend on the weight of the turkey:
 - 4-12 pounds- thaw 2-6 hours
 - 12-16 pounds- thaw 6-8 hours
 - 16-20 pounds- thaw 8-10 hours
 - 20-24 pounds- thaw 10-12 hours
 - Microwave oven: Follow microwave oven manufacturer's instructions. Turkey must be cooked immediately after thawing due to the potential for some parts of the turkey to begin to cook.
- Don't ever leave the cooking turkey unattended. This is the leading cause of fires over the holidays.
- If a grease fire occurs, do not use water to try and put it out. Cover it, turn off the heat source, and pour baking soda or salt on it to smother it.

References

Centers for Disease Control. (2020, October 14). *Food safety tips for the holidays*. <https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/communication/holidays.html>

United States Department of Agriculture (2013, July 31). *Turkey basics: Safe thawing*. <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety->

World Antimicrobial Awareness Week, November 18-24



The goal of World Antimicrobial Awareness Week is to raise awareness of antimicrobial resistance and encourage best practices for antibiotic use among the public, health care workers, and policy makers that will prevent the emergence and spread of antibiotic-resistant organisms. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that in the U.S. alone, at least 2.8 million people get an antibiotic resistant infection every year and 35,000 people die.

There are many things you can do to reduce your risk of infection including washing your hands regularly to help prevent the spread of germs, taking antibiotics as prescribed by your doctor, getting vaccinated to prevent infections, preparing food safely to avoid foodborne illnesses, and practicing safer sex to help prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections.

For more information on antimicrobial resistance, please visit the CDC's [Antimicrobial Resistance](#)

Select Reportable Diseases in Pinellas County

Disease	Pinellas		YTD Total		Pinellas Annual Totals		
	October 2020	October 2019	Pinellas 2020	Florida 2020	2019	2018	2017
A. Vaccine Preventable							
Measles	0	0	0	1	1	7	0
Mumps	0	0	1	52	7	10	3
Pertussis	0	0	8	208	27	32	36
Varicella	1	1	16	303	33	67	24
B. CNS Diseases & Bacteremias							
Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD)	0	0	0	10	3	1	2
Meningitis (Bacterial, Cryptococcal, Mycotic)	1	1	3	70	7	9	7
Meningococcal Disease	0	0	2	16	1	1	0
C. Enteric Infections							
Campylobacteriosis	26	21	205	2875	310	264	207
Cryptosporidiosis	6	2	37	248	64	34	40
Cyclosporiasis	0	0	8	142	28	4	6
<i>E. coli</i> Shiga Toxin (+)	1	0	7	403	24	15	22
Giardiasis	4	5	26	574	52	41	45
Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS)	0	0	0	2	1	0	0
Listeriosis	0	0	2	35	2	1	0
Salmonellosis	11	21	147	5299	201	233	279
Shigellosis	1	0	16	477	22	40	26
D. Viral Hepatitis							
Hepatitis A	0	6	4	914	377	113	1
Hepatitis B: Pregnant Woman	3	3	18	299	24	14	25
Hepatitis B, Acute	4	4	28	463	72	52	51
Hepatitis C, Acute	9	5	89	1341	82	40	30
E. Vector Borne/ Zoonoses							
Animal Rabies	0	1	0	67	2	1	3
Rabies, possible exposure	17	7	104	2823	128	130	140
Chikungunya Fever	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dengue	0	0	1	103	3	0	0
Eastern Equine Encephalitis	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lyme Disease	0	2	9	121	22	14	19
Malaria	1	0	2	18	5	3	0
West Nile Virus	0	0	0	89	0	0	0
Zika Virus Disease	0	0	0	1	3	2	5
F. Others							
Chlamydia	376	449	3326	n/a	4588	4422	418
Gonorrhea	161	171	1328	n/a	1537	1439	1574
Hansen's Disease	0	0	0	24	0	0	0
Legionellosis	3	3	30	690	43	37	28
Mercury Poisoning	0	0	1	9	1	1	1
Syphilis, Total	42	50	352	n/a	479	438	382
Syphilis, Primary and Secondary	24	23	160	n/a	213	190	160
Syphilis, Early Latent	11	19	123	n/a	191	158	128
Syphilis, Congenital	0	0	2	n/a	6	2	5
Syphilis, Late Syphilis	7	8	67	n/a	69	88	89
Tuberculosis	0	0	17	n/a	23	33	28
<i>Vibrio</i> Infections	0	0	10	169	18	6	11

*YTD up to November 1, 2020. n/a = not available at this time

Reportable diseases include confirmed and probable cases only. All case counts are current and provisional. Data is collected from the Merlin Reportable Disease database, surveillance systems maintained at the Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County, and Florida CHARTS <http://www.floridacharts.com/charts/default.aspx>. STD data in STARS is continually updated. Please note, data from the previous month takes up to an additional month or more to be correctly updated.