



Illinois State Medical Society



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Leading Business and Health Care Groups Urge Safe Holiday Celebrations *State must unite to slow spread of virus by limiting gatherings, following health guidelines*

SPRINGFIELD – The state’s leading business and health care organizations are collectively urging Illinoisans to safely celebrate the holidays and help slow the spread of the coronavirus by following all health guidelines, including limiting gatherings to immediate family members. The call comes amid a spike in coronavirus infections and hospitalizations that could grow worse if health guidelines are ignored during the holiday season, further threatening the stability of the health care system and causing additional turmoil for businesses and the economy.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently released recommendations for how to safely gather this holiday season. The safest option is to avoid travel, which increases risk of exposure, and limiting gatherings to one household. If gatherings will include people from more than one household, it is advised to limit the length of time spent together, and to keep festivities outside instead of indoors, which pose more risk. Attendees from different households should stay at least six feet apart, wear masks, wash hands and follow all other local health guidelines. The CDC advises that alcohol consumption may alter judgement and make it more difficult to adhere by proper safety measures.

“Wearing a mask and limiting our social gatherings over the holidays will protect our families and friends while also preserving our economy,” **said Mark Denzler, president & CEO of the Illinois Manufacturers’ Association.**

“While manufacturers are proudly leading the way forward with the development of coronavirus treatments and vaccines, we must all do what we can now to slow the spread until they are widely available. If we do not act now, it is possible that we will see further mitigation and business closures.”

“One of the simplest, but most effective steps we can take this holiday season is to wear a mask to protect ourselves and others who are not part of our household. Because of COVID-19, the physicians of Illinois implore you to reconsider your holiday plans this year. Large gatherings of family and friends meeting indoors is not a good idea. We know how much you want to celebrate, but we want you to stay healthy by avoiding situations that increase your risk of contracting the coronavirus,” **said Robert W. Panton, MD., Illinois State Medical Society President.**

“Retailers and their employees continue to work hard to ensure consumers have a safe shopping experience not only during the holiday season but thru the year. Please mask up and follow all public health guidelines to help keep stores open and protect your family, friends, and neighbors,” **said Rob Karr, president & CEO of the Illinois Retail Merchants Association.**

“Hospitals and their heroic nurses, doctors and healthcare professionals, who are on the frontlines fighting the pandemic and saving lives, urge Illinoisans to celebrate Thanksgiving safely,” **said Illinois Health and Hospital Association President & CEO A.J. Wilhelmi.** “Hospitals in every area of the state are now facing alarming surges in patients with COVID-19 that could pose some very significant challenges to the healthcare delivery system. But all of

us working together, using common sense and taking some simple steps during the holiday season, can protect our families, friends, neighbors and the healthcare workers who are selflessly serving our communities from this deadly virus.”

CELEBRATE THANKSGIVING SAFELY

SAFE

CELEBRATE AT HOME



Prepare traditional dishes with those in your household

Host a virtual dinner and share recipes with family and friends

Put up your favorite decorations and share photos online



Watch parades, sporting events and movies at home

LESS SAFE

IF YOU GATHER, DO SO WISELY

Keep it small and stay local

Stay outside if possible and ensure proper ventilation if indoors



Wear masks and social distance

Wash or sanitize your hands regularly, especially before eating



Avoid contact with non-attendees for 14 days before and after your gathering

UNSAFE

AVOID...

Large gatherings, especially indoors



Potlucks, buffets or other shared food

Places with crowds, such as stores, parades, and sports



Contact with anyone who is sick or may have been exposed to COVID-19



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