



Erica Pan, MD, MPH  
Acting State Public Health Officer

State of California—Health and Human Services Agency  
**California Department of Public Health**



**GAVIN NEWSOM**  
Governor

October 9, 2020

**TO:** All Californians

**SUBJECT:** Guidance for Private Gatherings

**Summary**

This guidance provides an updated plan for Californians to gather outside their household and replaces the March 16, 2020 and prior [gatherings guidance](#). It applies to private gatherings, and all other gatherings not covered by existing sector guidance are prohibited. Gatherings are defined as social situations that bring together people from different households at the same time in a single space or place. When people from different households mix, this increases the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

**Mandatory Requirements for All Gatherings**

All persons planning to host or participate in a private gathering, as defined above, must comply with the following requirements. Local health jurisdictions may be more restrictive than this guidance. Refer to your local guidance for what is allowed in your area.

**1. Attendance**

- a. Gatherings that include more than **3 households are prohibited**. This includes everyone present, including hosts and guests. Remember, the smaller the number of people, the safer.
- b. Keep the households that you interact with stable over time. By spending time with the same people, risk of transmission is reduced. Participating in multiple gatherings with different households or groups is strongly discouraged.
- c. The host should collect names of all attendees and contact information in case contact tracing is needed later.

**2. Gather Outdoors**

- a. Gatherings that occur outdoors are significantly safer than indoor gatherings. All gatherings must be held outside. Attendees may go inside to use restrooms as long as the restrooms are frequently sanitized.
- b. Gatherings may occur in outdoor spaces that are covered by umbrellas, canopies, awnings, roofs, and other shade structures provided that at least three sides of the space (or 75%) are open to the outdoors.
- c. A gathering of no more than three households is permitted in a public park or other outdoor space, even if unrelated gatherings of other groups up to three households are also occurring in the same park or other outdoor space. If



multiple such gatherings are occurring, mixing between groups gatherings is not allowed. Additionally, multiple gatherings of three households cannot be jointly organized or coordinated to occur in the same public park or other outdoor space at the same time – this would constitute a gathering exceeding the permitted size.

3. *Don't Attend Gatherings If You Feel Sick or You Are in a High-Risk Group*
  - a. Anyone with any COVID-19-like symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, night sweats, sore throat, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, tiredness, muscle or body aches, headaches, confusion, or loss of sense of taste/smell), **must stay home and not come into contact with anyone outside their household.**
  - b. Anyone who develops COVID-19 within 48 hours after attending a gathering should notify the other attendees as soon as possible regarding the potential exposure.
  - c. People at higher risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19 (such as older adults and people with chronic medical conditions) are strongly urged not to attend any gatherings.
4. *Practice Physical Distancing and Hand Hygiene at Gatherings*
  - a. For any gatherings permitted under this guidance, the space must be large enough so that everyone at a gathering can maintain at least a 6-foot physical distance from others (not including their own household) at all times.
  - b. Seating must provide at least 6 feet of distance (in all directions—front-to-back and side-to-side) between different households.
  - c. Everyone at a gathering should frequently wash their hands with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available. A place to wash hands or hand sanitizer must be available for participants to use.
  - d. Shared items should not be used during a gathering. As much as possible, any food or beverages at outdoor gatherings must be in single-serve disposable containers. If providing single-serve containers is not possible, food and beverages must be served by a person who washes or sanitizes their hands frequently, and wears a face covering. **Self-serve items from communal containers should not be used.**
5. *Wear a Face Covering to Keep COVID-19 from Spreading*
  - a. When gathering, **face coverings must be worn** in accordance with the CDPH [Guidance on the Use of Face Coverings, unless an exemption is applicable.](#)
  - b. People at gatherings may remove their face coverings briefly to eat or drink as long as they stay at least 6 feet away from everyone outside their own household, and put their face covering back on as soon as they are done with the activity.
  - c. Face coverings can also be removed to meet urgent medical needs (for example, to use an asthma inhaler, take medication, or if feeling light-headed).
6. *Keep it short*

- a. Gatherings should be two hours or less. The longer the duration, the risk of transmission increases.
7. *Rules for Singing, Chanting, and Shouting at Outdoor Gatherings*
- a. Singing, chanting, shouting, and physical exertion significantly increases the risk of COVID-19 transmission because these activities increase the release of respiratory droplets and fine aerosols into the air. Because of this, singing, chanting, and shouting are strongly discouraged, but if they occur, the following rules and recommendations apply:
    - i. All people who are singing or chanting **should wear a face covering at all times** while singing or chanting, including anyone who is leading a song or chant. Because these activities pose a very high risk of COVID-19 transmission, face coverings are essential to reduce the spread of respiratory droplets and fine aerosols;
    - ii. People who are singing, shouting, chanting, or exercising are strongly encouraged to maintain physical distancing beyond 6 feet to further reduce risk.
    - iii. People who are singing or chanting are strongly encouraged to do so quietly (at or below the volume of a normal speaking voice).
  - b. Instrumental music is allowed as long as the musicians maintain at least 6-foot physical distancing. Musicians must be from one of the three households. Playing of wind instruments (any instrument played by the mouth, such as a trumpet or clarinet) is strongly discouraged.

## **Context**

COVID-19 continues to pose a severe risk to communities and requires all people in California to follow necessary precautions and to adapt the way they live and function in light of this ongoing risk. The safest way to gather is to spend time with people in the same household or to gather virtually.

In general, the **more people from different households** a person interacts with at a gathering, the **closer** the physical interaction is, and the **longer** the interaction lasts, the higher the risk that a person with a COVID-19 infection, symptomatic or asymptomatic, may spread it to others. Public health studies have also shown that the risk of transmission is increased **in indoor spaces**, particularly when there isn't appropriate ventilation.<sup>1</sup> Unlike indoor spaces, wind and air in outdoor spaces can help reduce spread of the virus from one person to another.

Planning scenarios published by the CDC estimate that, on average, a person with COVID-19 goes on to infect between 2-4 people, with a best estimate of 2.5 when there are no preventive

---

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Hiroshi Nishiura, et al., Closed environments facilitate secondary transmission of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), available at <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.02.28.20029272v2.full.pdf>; Hu Qian, et al., "Indoor transmission of SARS-CoV-2" [pre-print] published in medRxiv on April 4, 2020, available at <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.04.04.20053058v1>.

measures.<sup>2</sup> For example, if each infected person spreads the virus to two people, who in turn spread it to two others each; those four will spread the virus to eight others; those eight will spread the virus to 16; and so on. As a result, after 10 transmission cycles, one person could be responsible for 1,024 other people contracting the virus.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, there is broad agreement that people who are not experiencing symptoms can still spread COVID-19<sup>4</sup>. The fact that COVID-19 can be spread by people who don't have symptoms or aren't showing symptoms yet is one of the aspects of the COVID-19 that makes it difficult to control.

All gatherings pose a higher risk of transmission and spread of COVID-19 when people mix from different households and communities. The likelihood of transmission and spread increases with laughing, singing, loud talking and difficulty maintaining physical distance. Limiting attendance at gatherings is a way to reduce the risk of spread as it lowers the number of different people who are interacting. Additionally, by limiting attendance there is an improved ability to perform effective contact tracing if there is a positive case discovered, which can help to slow the spread of COVID-19<sup>5</sup>. People who do choose to attend gatherings should discuss and agree upon the specific group rules before convening together.

---

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/planning-scenarios.html>

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Report 3: Natsuko Imai et al, WHO Collaborating Centre for Infectious Disease Modelling, MRC Centre for Global Infectious Disease Analysis, J-IDEA, "Imperial college London, UK. Transmissibility of 2019 -n-CoV)." See also Inglesby T B JAMA Public Health Measures and the Reproduction Number of SARS-CoV-2. JAMA Network.2020.7878 (May 1, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> Transmission of SARS-CoV-2: implications for infection prevention precautions," <https://www.who.int/news-room/commentaries/detail/transmission-of-sars-cov-2-implications-for-infection-prevention-precautions>

<sup>5</sup> See <https://www.health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/preventing-the-spread-of-the-coronavirus>