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Stay Home, Stay Safe – Celebrating Holidays as COVID-19 Cases Surge

Washburn County healthcare organizations, including Essentia Health – Spooner Clinic, Indianhead Medical Center, Northlakes Community Clinic, Spooner Health, and the Washburn County Health Department, are urging residents not to gather with non-household members to celebrate Thanksgiving this year. Traveling, hosting guests indoors, and sharing food, utensils, and plates all significantly increase the risk of spreading COVID-19.

As of Wednesday, November 17th all but one county in Wisconsin are seeing critically high levels of COVID-19 activity. In Washburn County, it took 165 days between confirming our first case and confirming our hundredth case. In the week spanning from November 12th to November 19th, we recorded 125 new cases with no signs of slowing down.

With the surge in COVID-19 cases, even small gatherings pose a risk. The Wisconsin Department of Health Services has released the following [recommendations](#) for celebrating the holiday safely:

- Share meals with people who live in your household.
- Avoid travel.
- Have virtual gatherings with friends and family.
- Shop online or order delivery.
- Watch sports, events, or parades from home.

Critically high levels of COVID-19 cases have impacted the ability of Public Health to notify positive cases and their close contacts in a timely manner. This severely limits efforts to contain the virus. Washburn County healthcare organizations are urging everyone to take action to stop the uncontrolled spread of COVID-19 in the community.

Everyday practices to stop the spread include:

- Physically distance at least 6 feet from people you do not live with.
- Wear a face mask if you must be around others or in public.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Indoors: do not gather with people outside of your household.
- Outdoors: limit gatherings to 10 people or fewer, physically distance, and wear face coverings.
- If symptomatic, call your health care provider, get a test, and stay home while awaiting results.
- Cooperate with public health officials if you have tested positive or are a close contact.
- Self-quarantine for 14 days if you are identified as a close contact of a positive case.

By making the difficult decision to cancel holiday plans this year and celebrate safely at home, you can protect your loved ones and continue to gather for years to come.

For more information on COVID-19 in Washburn County, visit <https://www.co.washburn.wi.us/news/public-health/Coronavirus-Outbreak>