

# Banner Health recommends alternatives to in-person gatherings this Thanksgiving

**Be creative and be safe this holiday season**

PHOENIX (Nov.17, 2020) – The United States is experiencing uncontrollable spread of COVID-19, and social gatherings are an important contributor to the rise in COVID-19 cases. Banner Health advises that individuals evaluate the risk level of their Thanksgiving plans and consider safer alternatives for those activities that present a higher risk of contracting or spreading the virus.

*“ Keeping our loved ones safe is the best gift that we can give one another for the holidays.”*

The safest option for you, your family and the community this year is to host a small family dinner at home with only members of your household. Consider using technology to connect with your extended family and friends. Set up your computer, tablet or phone at the table and share a meal together as if you were there in person.

Participating in an outdoor food swap with your extended family and friends is another safe alternative to in-person gatherings this Thanksgiving. Assign each household a dish to prepare and package in separate food storage containers. Schedule an outdoor drop-off or exchange so that everyone can share and collect the prepared dishes. Make sure to wear a mask to the exchange and wipe down the containers with disinfectant when you get home.

Attending a small, outdoor dinner is also an option. Please keep in mind that the risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19 is greater when interacting with others outside of your household. The [CDC says](#) there are several factors that contribute to the risk of getting and spreading COVID-19 at small in-person gatherings. They include: Community levels of COVID-19, exposure during travel, location of the gathering, duration of the gathering, number and crowding of people at the gathering, behaviors of attendees *prior to the gathering* and behaviors of attendees *during the gathering*.

If you plan to host a small gathering this Thanksgiving, please follow these recommendations to reduce the risk level of your celebration:

- Set up tables outdoors with plenty of distance between them.
- Sit immediate households together at tables so there is no comingling with other household units.
- Do not attend if you or a member of your household is sick.
- Pre-plate food by designated individuals who are masked to avoid cross-contamination of serving utensils.
- When engaging with others outside of the dinner portion in close proximity, make sure everyone is masked at all times. This includes children 2 years of age or older.

“Keeping our loved ones safe is the best gift that we can give one another for the holidays,” said Dr. Marjorie Bessel, chief clinical officer for Banner Health. “Make these sacrifices for your family and friends this year so that you can preserve many holiday celebrations in the years to come.”

Visit the Banner Health blog for more guidance on [holiday travel](#) and how to [celebrate safely](#) this holiday season.

## About Banner Health

As one of the largest nonprofit health care systems in the country, the team at Banner Health is committed to ensuring all Banner locations are a safe place for care. Headquartered in Phoenix, Banner Health owns and operates 30 acute-care hospitals and an array of other services, including Banner Imaging, Banner Telehealth, and Banner Urgent Care. Team members are dedicated to protecting the health and safety of patients, be it a routine checkup, elective surgery or an urgent health service. Waiting room and employee workstation layouts maintain proper social distancing; screenings are conducted at hospital entrances to verify that all employees and visitors are well; and, all Banner physicians are equipped to visit patients remotely. Learn more about Banner's commitment to safety at [bannerhealth.com/safecare](https://bannerhealth.com/safecare).

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