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Butler County
General Health District

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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What does a safe Thanksgiving look like in Butler County?

BUTLER COUNTY, OHIO – Butler County public health officials and experts across the nation issue a strong warning: Visiting family and friends can put everyone in danger this Thanksgiving and winter holiday season.

“The best way to show that you love your family and friends is to make a commitment not to gather,” says Jennifer Bailer Health Commissioner for the Butler County General Health District. “Many of us look forward to celebrating with our loved ones all year long, so of course folks want to be with their families, it’s hard wired within us. This is one year to do it differently.”

The status of COVID-19 in regional hospitals has reached a critical level. Some in the region are on the brink of full capacity, which could ultimately affect their ability to care for those that have COVID-19. In addition, it could impact those who need the hospital for other care such as heart attacks, car accidents, or premature births.

We cannot maintain this path.

With the dramatic increases in cases of COVID across the county, everyone is impacted. Bailer says, “What happens in our communities also happens to our health care workers. Hospitals report staffing shortages now because COVID is impacting healthcare workers and their families. It isn’t just beds and ventilators, healthcare workers are also in short supply.

In addition, some business and schools are finding it difficult to stay open because they have so many sick workers. “We want our businesses to stay open! One way to help with that is stay apart this Thanksgiving so COVID can’t spread,” says Carrie Yeager, Director of Environmental Health at the Butler County General Health District.

How do I know what decision is right for me for the upcoming holidays?

- Weigh the risks of COVID-19 for yourself and your loved ones
 - Talk about it ahead of time
 - Review or ask about the guest list, it should be a short list
 - Ask what safety measures will be in place
 - Check or ask about the space to ensure safe distancing



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- If you decide to get together, make a plan, share with guests, and stick to it
- Think about specific things you can do to reduce the risk and make the gathering safer.

What does a safer Thanksgiving actually look like?

The safest way to celebrate is not to celebrate in person

- Avoid gathering at all and find alternate ways to celebrate.
- Meet virtually via a video call or phone call.
- Consider making some new traditions.
- Organize a virtual call with extended family to discuss everyone's feasts and what they are thankful for.
- Share recipes instead of dinner.
- Dig out those old photos and videos of Thanksgivings past, use video chat to share your favorites with relatives, and ask them to do the same. Have the most tech-savvy family member create a shareable video combining all the contributions.
- Have your own parade. Drive by homes of neighbors or family members to wish them a Happy Thanksgiving.
- Missing the turkey trot? Take a walk with your family to help work off your holiday meal

If you do gather, do it differently

- Have a small dinner that includes only those who already reside in your home.
- Host your gathering outdoors, when possible.
- Make sure the space is well ventilated by opening windows and doors, if possible
- Arrange tables and chairs to allow for social distancing.
 - People from the same household can be in groups together and do not need to be 6 feet apart – just 6 feet away from other groups or families.
- Limit people going in and out of the areas where food is being prepared or handled, if possible.
- Have one household approach the food serving area at a time to prevent congregating.
- Use single-use options or identify one person to serve any sharable items.
- Avoid serving dinner as a buffet.

Before you gather

- If you or someone you live with is sick or has any symptoms that could be COVID, stay at home or cancel the gathering;



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- Make sure you have hand sanitizer or make it available while gathering;
- Set your own boundaries and follow through;
- Avoid judgement about the decisions of others;

While you are gathering

- **Practice the 3 W's (Wear, Wait, Wash)** during the event:
 - **Wear a face covering** when not eating or drinking,
 - **Wait six feet apart** from others, and
 - **Wash your hands** regularly.
- When guests need to remove their mask to eat or drink, maintain 6 feet distance and put the mask back on after done eating or drinking.
- Regularly disinfect frequently touches surfaces like doorknobs and light switches.

“Governor Mike DeWine reminds us that the mass gathering rules are still in place. If you feel you can gather safely, keep your guest list to fewer than ten people,” added Yeager.

“Show your love for your family by keeping them safe this year. With vaccines on the horizon, we are hopeful we will only have to do this once. We can celebrate Thanksgiving and winter holidays in different ways this one year in order to protect ourselves, our families, our health care workers and all of us!” finishes Bailer.

Holiday Resources

Butler County General Health District: <http://health.bcoho.us/>

Butler County Cares Campaign, Safer Gatherings: <https://butlercountycares.com/>

Ohio Department of Health, Holiday Guide: <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/>

CDC, Thanksgiving: <https://www.cdc.gov/>

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