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**NEWS
RELEASE**

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Health Officials Urge Residents to Celebrate the Holidays Safely

Prevention Starts With You, Test Before, After Holidays

EL PASO, Texas – Health officials are urging the community who are gathering or traveling this holiday to celebrate safely by taking the proper safety precautions and get tested before and after returning from travel.

“We want people to celebrate this holiday season keeping traditions alive yet continuing to follow a few simple steps to keep everyone safe and healthy” said City-County Health Authority Dr. Hector Ocaranza. “Avoid large gatherings and rather celebrate in small groups, get tested before and after you travel or if you have any symptoms; vaccinate yourself and if you have not received your booster shot, please do so. By protecting yourself, you will protect your family and your community”

Health officials urge the community to celebrate the holiday season safely using these safety precautions:

- Strongly encourage anyone not vaccinated, or not fully vaccinated to vaccinate against COVID-19 immediately, especially before the holidays; and if eligible to get a booster dose as recommended by the FDA and CDC.
- Gatherings including people not fully vaccinated, should consider gathering outdoors (weather permitting); if held indoors, promote ventilation by opening windows and doors.
- Small home gatherings are preferred; or may choose to celebrate virtually with others using a virtual video conference platform. Another safe option is to organize a potluck and share dishes with friends and other family members by dropping off food in disposable containers at their doorstep and share dinner virtually.
- All members of a household, including the member who tested positive, should remain under quarantine for 10 days and avoid gathering with others to prevent exposing others.
- Anyone who exhibits COVID-19 symptoms should get tested, **self-quarantine and NOT gather**, unless test results are negative!

A complete list of precautions can be found on the www.EPStrong.org website under the Order Tab.

For individuals who are traveling, please be aware that travel increases your chance of getting and spreading COVID-19. If you travel:

- It is best to travel when fully vaccinated and get your booster shot if eligible before traveling.
- Always wear a mask in public settings; wearing a mask while on public transportation is still a federal requirement.
- Get tested before you travel to know your status; postpone your travel if you test positive and isolate!
- Get your flu shot before you travel. For free flu shot locations, visit BePOWERflu.com.
- Practice prevention and good hygiene by washing your hands often or use hand sanitizer avoid touching your mask, eyes, nose and mouth.
- Take extra supplies with you such as masks, Kleenex and hand sanitizer.

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Upon Return:

- Get tested for COVID-19 five days after returning from travel and immediately if experiencing symptoms. Stay home while waiting for test results and **DO NOT** gather with people outside your household.
- Observe the recommended time-period for isolation and quarantine to avoid further spread of the virus if you are COVID-19 positive or were exposed to someone infected.

The number of COVID-19 cases and deaths have increased, and health officials expect to see another spike in the coming weeks because of the holiday season. Health officials call on the general public and businesses to help minimize another spike by observing recommended precautions listed in the Health Orders and Guidance page provided at EPStrong.org.

Appointments are required for COVID-19 testing at the City COVID-19 Clinics and can be made by scheduling online via this link, <https://cityofelpaso-dtra.powerappsportals.us/en-US/>.

It is **STRONGLY** recommended that the public continue to wear face coverings while indoors and in crowded spaces. Because an infected person can transmit the COVID-19 virus to others before showing any symptoms, keeping a person's nose and mouth covered is necessary to help slow the spread of the virus. The community is also reminded to continue practicing prevention and good hygiene by washing your hands often or use hand sanitizer and practicing social distancing.

For more COVID-19 information to include testing and more, visit EPStrong.org. For information on COVID-19 vaccines, visit EPCovidVaccine.com.

We ask that you share the video below on your newscast and on your social media platforms:

Message from the City of El Paso – [Holiday PSA](#)

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