



2021 Winter Covid-19 Guidance Update

November 4, 2021

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recently updated its guidance for holiday gatherings and for fully vaccinated individuals in general. The guidance for unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated individuals remains the same. As a reminder previous mitigation measures such as mask wearing, social distancing, hand washing with soap and water, and vaccination are our most effective measures to limit the spread of COVID-19.

As the number of positive cases of COVID-19 seems to ebb and flow, people can experience "Covid Weariness" or "fatigue". When this occurs, people may forget the basic mitigation measures that have proven helpful in curbing the spread of COVID-19. In order to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, culturally appropriate reminder messages can be utilized as powerful tools to reinforce the use of vaccines and various mitigation measures.

Tribal leaders, regulators and operators can use their knowledge of their communities, its values, and its culture to craft messaging that will be the most impactful for the intended audience. Some tribes have reported success in engaging the local communities through the use of text messaging, signage that includes reminders in both native and English languages, and recorded messages from tribal leaders that remind everyone of the importance of vaccination and the tribe's current mitigation strategies. Other successful campaigns have been reported for the use of reminders on gaming machines, digital marketing displays, and billboards in front of casino and other popular community buildings.

Last, but not least, remember that public health officials are constantly studying the COVID-19 virus and the various variants. As new variants come about and as the science continues to evolve, there may be revisions to this guidance to include the various mitigation measures.

Group Gathering Guidance update

Winter is a time when many of us gather indoors to participate in numerous types of traditional holiday and cultural gatherings. These gatherings are typically associated with multiple generations of family and community members including our elders, who appear to be at increased risk, and the very young, who may not yet have the ability to be vaccinated and who may have difficulties maintaining their masking and social distancing guidelines. In addition, the drop in temperatures makes outdoor gatherings or outdoor dining impractical or very difficult. The guidance below includes embedded links to the various CDC resources. The NIGC maintains a FAQ and numerous updates here: <https://www.nigc.gov/commission/nigc-guidance-regarding-covid-19>.

- If you are not fully vaccinated and 2 years of age or older, you should wear a mask in indoor public places.
- In general, you do not need to wear a mask in outdoor settings.
 - In areas with [high numbers of COVID-19 cases](#), consider wearing a mask in crowded outdoor settings and for activities with [close contact](#) with others who are not fully vaccinated.
- People who have a health condition or are taking medications that weaken their immune system may not be fully protected even if they are fully vaccinated. They should continue to take all [precautions recommended for unvaccinated people, including wearing a well-fitted mask](#), until advised otherwise by their healthcare provider.
- If you are fully vaccinated, to maximize protection from the Delta variant and prevent possibly spreading it to others, wear a mask indoors in public if you are in an area [of substantial or high transmission](#).
- If you are fully vaccinated, see [When You've Been Fully Vaccinated](#).

The NIGC encourages tribes to review their current mitigation procedures, their infectious disease response plan, and the current local virus conditions and compare them to the recommendations put forth in this update as well as the current CDC updates and make any changes as needed. The pandemic has proven that the on the ground conditions can change quickly and that rapid responses can be very beneficial in preventing the spread of COVID-19. The NIGC encourages tribes, TGRAs, and operations to reach out to their NIGC Regional Office, the CDC, or IHS for assistance with any questions or concerns about specific mitigation measures or infectious disease response plans.

Other helpful links include:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/tribal/ceremonies-gatherings.html>

<https://www.ihs.gov/coronavirus/>

<https://www.bia.gov/coronavirus>